

# The Massachusetts Review

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The cover portrait of Bertolt Brecht was cut on wood by Leonard Baskin in 1952. (Collection of Louis Smith, Northampton, Mass.)	

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## THE MASSACHUSETTS REVIEW

University of Massachusetts  
Amherst

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## Three Sisters

FRIDAY EVENING the family ate together. Every other evening Fay was busy giving lessons at the homes of her pupils, taking courses herself, or attending a concert or recital. And when Fay ate with the family everything had to be just so, and Essie, who came in to do the house cleaning, stayed on to serve.

The table in the dining room was set. The turquoise green tablecloth which Fay had bought on Fifth Avenue was spread, the silver was taken out of the Italian Renaissance sideboard, and the expensive salt shakers which no one dared call cellars were placed within easy reach of Fay, who could never have enough of salt in spite of her high blood pressure. In the center was a vase filled with marigolds, her favorite flower, resembling pieces of orange bath sponge.

Friday afternoon Papa and Mama climbed together into the bathtub—about the only thing they could do together without a frown from Fay—because he had to be kept from slipping and ripping his hernias again. Dressed in the clothes which they had bought for the High Holy Days, they waited for the girls to come downstairs. It was close, but they sat opposite each other as if they were caked or set in molds. The old man put his hand to his forehead and muttered, "Drops like beans." He did not rise to pull back the curtains, nets heavy enough to hold a school of fish, because Fay flew into a fury if the neighbors "looked into their mouths."

Only when the girls filed down and Fay pressed the button flooding the room with light did the old people relax. Then, as the girls seated themselves, Essie, who had been standing motionless at the door to the kitchen, stepped in with the tray. She wore a lacy apron no larger than a man's handkerchief,

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slippers colored like pigeons' feet, pearl-white earrings half buried by her hair which was bleached brown and stood over her forehead in a hedge. Tall, graceful, almost white-skinned, she stepped so lightly that her footfalls could barely be heard.

Fay, who had shot sharp glances at her parents seated at each side of her, opened the letters and magazines which had been piled near her plate. Gert, generally restless and bored by all the fuss, propped up her head with her thick hands. Only Shirley, who was always unhurried, cool, spotless, gave her vague, dreamy smile and observed that Papa was probably hungry.

Without raising her eyes from her letter, Fay murmured, "Eat, eat."

They started on their fruit cocktails. With every mouthful, they swallowed every arch of her eyebrows and wrinkle of her nose, hoping that perhaps something had arrived by mail which would lift her black, bitter mood. Just last week, the dinner had turned into a storm when Gert had given it as her opinion that the only way to handle music teachers who muscle into other people's territories was for Fay to belong to the American Federation of Musicians.

Their mother kept stealing frightened glances across the table at the old man. He caught her look and gave her a reassuring nod. Her thin bloodless lips like frayed strings barely moved; she sighed, and the wrinkles grew deeper on a face that was cut like a well-used breadboard.

When Essie brought in the soup tureen and placed it before Fay, Fay asked, "Why don't you eat with us, Essie?"

The Negro woman would be uncomfortable and preferred the kitchen, but it was just like Fay to insist on having her way. Essie hesitated.

"Set a place for yourself. I knew when I bought this tablecloth, I should have bought a sixth napkin also."

"I'll have a cup of tea."

"Good. You know you are always welcome to eat with the family."

"Thank you, Miss Fay."

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"You're entirely welcome."

Mama, who had been hanging on to the conversation, blinked in bewilderment, and Papa, forgetting his manners, humped over his soup like a weary camel. Gert gave a snort. Shirley smiled vaguely through her glasses.

Essie served the beef flanken and the tea and sat down on the edge of her chair. She put her hands up to her earrings which looked like birds' eggs, and bent stiffly over her cup.

Papa couldn't control himself any longer. He said huskily, "Faygele, she sits on shpilkis."

"I know what I'm doing," pronounced Fay sternly, and then translated his Yiddish. The old man flushed behind his muzzle of a beard.

"Oh, no, Mr. Moscow," cried Essie. "I sit on no pins and needles. It's only I'm in such a blessed hurry to get home. You know my husband works nights. Oh, my, and I've got a rehearsal. Can I speak to them now, Mrs. Moscow?" And without waiting for the consent, she explained, "I told it to Mrs. Moscow a week ago, but she said it was a church."

The girls turned to Mama, who picked up her napkin and held it before her like a veil.

Fay stabbed a harsh glance at the old woman. "Speak up, Essie dear."

"It's true our church is giving it, Miss Fay, but it's not going to be held in the chapel. It will be in our auditorium. Now, what we're having," she said confidentially in her low, sweet voice, "is a song night and harvest home. We've got a good choir and wonderful solo singers, and during the intermission there's going to be a show of pictures, art work, sewing, and bake stuff members of the church is preparing. It's selling talent, that's what our pastor said. Tickets is only a dollar and a half a piece." She took four tickets out of the apron and handed them to Fay. "I know Mr. Moscow don't go out much or far. But I thought you ladies would enjoy yourselves, besides helping us. It's early next month. Besides we get prizes for the number of tickets we sell. And I do want to win a prize. Then, Miss Fay, other white folks I work for—I've told you

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about them, the doctor and his wife, who are from the top shelf—has bought tickets and promised to come.” She had risen and paused, tall and confident. “I do know you as a music teacher and the ladies, your sisters, and your mother will have a good evening.”

“We’ll come,” promised Fay, her grated, pock-marked face turning pink with pleasure. “And Essie, if you ever do want to do any rehearsing, don’t be afraid to let me know. I can accompany you on the piano.”

Essie thanked her and taking her cup of tea, turned to the kitchen.

“And if you are in a hurry, we can take care of the dishes.”

Delighted, the young woman left her tea unfinished, got into her street clothes, and flew off.

As the door shut, Gert snapped, “Fay, I’ve told you a thousand times never to make decisions for me.”

“You can skip going to that union once.”

“My union is my bread, just as your music is yours.”

“Are you afraid like Mama that it’s a church?”

“Don’t be a damned fool!”

Papa coughed behind his fingers, twisted as if they had been broken and then badly reset. “Please, children.”

Fay sat stiff as a poker, her burnt-looking lips twisting around her teeth.

Gert disregarded the danger signs. “You’re not the only one that’s got his troubles. I got plenty in the shop, but I don’t take it out on the rest of us when I get home.”

“Girls, girls,” begged their mother timorously.

Fay’s eyes flashed. “I warned you that being the only woman in a dirty machine shop would be too much for even you. You could have come in with me, you could have been a physical education teacher.”

Gert spoke slowly as if she were coating each word with lead. “Just keep your nose out of my behind.”

“You with your filthy language!” Fay leaped up, jerking the table.

The horse-radish spilled, staining the turquoise green table-

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cloth, and as the old woman, moaning, dabbed at it with her napkin, and then became terrified as she spread the stains, Fay sailed from the room, her short, high-breasted figure swollen with rage, her hair-do high like a forecastle.

Shirley shook her head reproachfully. "Gert, you shouldn't speak that way when she isn't feeling well. You know you shouldn't." In her agitation she plucked at her full white throat, which was marked with a scar as if from a tight necklace.

"She gives me a pain with her airs. She plays the lady in front of Essie because she is a West Indian. If she were one of our Negroes from the South, she'd treat her differently."

Fay had slammed into the studio and shut the doors behind her.

The Friday evening was spoiled, and when the girls had finished eating, the old man with his hump of a nose and his great humped back and sandy face, got up quietly and began clearing the table, and the old woman rose with a groan to help him.

Shirley followed to reassure them and shoo them out of the kitchen. Gert and she would take care of everything. "Won't you, Gert?"

Gert nodded morosely.

After the girls got through with the washing and drying, Gert walked into the garden where her parents sat together on the bench. She said angrily, "Why do you look as if the world's coming to an end? So she got sore and didn't finish her supper." The sound of the piano could be heard. "The duchess!" In disgust she left her parents and walked out into the street.

She lit a cigaret, and with her hands in the pockets of her slacks, her blouse open so that her thick brown neck was exposed, she strolled past the synagogue and across the street to the tavern, which was broadcasting a ball game and where the bartender greeted her, "Hi, Gertie," and poured her a beer.

Fay left the studio after the family had gone to bed. She walked in the garden up and down the path between the fire thorns and the nightshade which her father had dug up out of a

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lot and transplanted, the flowers looking as if they burned tiny sulfur candles.

From the upper part of the house where Shirley and Gert shared a bedroom—Fay had her own—they could see her parading up and down in her trailing, flowered housecoat, teetering on spike-heeled slippers. Every once in a while she stopped and clenched and unclenched her fists: small-handed, finding it difficult to span C to C, she was always exercising her hands, using motions that suggested a wringing of the hands.

Shirley had undressed near the closet, standing modestly behind the door, which had a mirror. She slipped her nightgown over her soft, bulky, milk-white body. And then as she sat down to brush her hair, she murmured that Fay would be walking the garden all night long. "The neighbors—."

"To hell with the neighbors," grunted Gert. She was lying naked on her back, her short powerful arms, stained with oil blotches, were crossed under her neck. She glanced at Shirley brushing her long hair. "She's got to be told where to get off. I've taken enough from her." She yawned with a cracking of her jaws. "No wonder she could never keep a man."

"But, Gert, that's no way to talk."

"That's the only way. All you know is Fay. You've even turned Papa crazy. Because she gets mad and sits for hours chopping Chopin or prancing up and down the garden, the world ain't coming to an end. We got to live too. Maybe you ought to think about yourself for a change. She screwed up her life. All right, that's too bad. But why should you? You won't see thirty anymore, and for a girl like you marriage is the only way out. Soon you'll get overripe. You had chances but passed them by because you were afraid you were dishing Fay out. Nuts! If I were a man, I'd take you at the drop of a hat. Sure, any day in preference to Madame Chrysanthemum."

The blood flooded Shirley's face. "Gertie!" she gasped.

Gert snorted, "All you can do is squeak." She rolled over in disgust and fell asleep.

Their parents' bedroom was on the other side of the house, facing the street. The old couple in their twin beds could not

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compose themselves to sleep. The old woman sighed and groaned and muttered to herself. The old man got up for a drink of water, complaining that he had a sour stomach. Before he could take more than a couple of steps the old woman warned him about his hernias, and he had to lie down and put on his harness. Then, girded safely around his broken belly, he stole downstairs and opened the door carefully. He could make out nothing in the garden. There was a shelf of cloud, and finally the moon came up and hung there like a bitten bone. A bush rustled.

He retreated into the kitchen, waited for a while in the hope that Fay would stop her pacing, as if she carried her cage with her, and come to bed. In the dark he groped his way to the frigidaire and helped himself to seltzer and filled a glass for the old woman. On the way up he paused to peek into the studio. The street light slipping through the blind lit up the grand piano and the bust of Chopin. Hearing his wife's whisper at the head of the stairs, he labored up to her.

To her "Still out there?" he nodded and humped on the edge of the bed, his veiny swabs of hands on his knees. She gulped the seltzer down but that did not help. He shut the door though it was stifling hot and quietly got into bed with her. With a groan she turned to him.

They had always been close to each other. They had eaten from the same plate, slept in the same bed, and never said an ugly word to each other. All this had changed with Fay's growing up, with her persuading the girls to help her buy this house in the hope that she could establish a conservatory in it eventually, with a couple of her former students as instructors, poor substitutes for her sisters who had turned out to have no more feeling for music than hunks of wood. The house had not helped. Lately, Fay had begun losing lessons. The girls picked at one another, and to eat from the same plate and share the same bed was old-fashioned, not healthful, sinful. The old man stroked the withered, narrow shoulders.

They did not sleep all night. When the dawn was like a saucerful of milk, the door in the rear opened. There were



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movements in the kitchen, dining room, studio—Fay was the one who replaced the flowers in the vases, insisting that each upper room have a vase too—and at last she came up, drew a bath, and went to her room.

Reluctantly the old man crawled to the synagogue. The old woman remained, feeling guilty, having reassured him that she would be able to see to it that the girls did not get into another quarrel. Shirley, who worked half a day Saturday in the cafeteria where she was cashier, came down for her breakfast. She was followed shortly by Gert, who was going to spend the day at the union.

The old woman served both of them, almost trembling in her eagerness, afraid to speak up and yet desperate. Finally as Shirley rose, she spoke up, knowing that Shirley would support her. "Gertie, child, please try not to, try not to quarrel with Faygele. Please."

Gertie gave her a sour glance.

"Shirley, tell her it is necessary. Faygele is Faygele, but—"

Gertie grunted and lit her cigaret. "Let her keep off my back."

"Thank you, child." The old woman took Gert's head in her hands, hesitated, and kissed her on the lips.

"Why did you stop?" said Gert. "You know I never use lipstick."

Shirley beamed.

After both girls left together, the old woman sat down. She dropped her hands into her lap, the veins unravelling down her shrunken arms. She remembered with a start that she hadn't warned Gertie about smoking in the street on the Sabbath, and that she hadn't gone to the synagogue. The good Lord would understand. At least there was peace again. She dressed as if she were going out, in her white stockings and a small lace shawl, and throwing her shawl over her head in the corner of her kitchen, the shop in which she had machined her life, in which working for her family she had also labored for God, she opened her prayer book and gave a deep sigh.

At noon Fay found her in the corner praying. She leaped

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to her feet and was ready to prepare breakfast if Fay would light the gas, but Fay would have nothing but the juice of two lemons with a few drops of water from the tap. She drank without a grimace; her face, grated and pocked, looked like a stone in the highway. Rinsing her glass, she told her mother to continue with her prayers, and went into the studio.

At one o'clock the old man had not yet returned, and the bell rang and two of the students came in. The banging began, and one could hear Fay's harsh, impatient voice. The old woman rose from her chair, clutching the prayer book to her chest, hurried to the studio, raised her hand as if to knock at the door, reconsidered, and cried to herself, "Faygele, is that the way? You are driving them away. Soon you will be left with nothing."

After the lessons Fay got dressed and hurried off without a word, passing the old man, who was coming down the lane between the garden and the high hedges. He looked questioningly at his wife as he entered the house. She sighed. He rubbed his hands briskly. "Nu, let us have something to eat. You sit, I'll serve."

She smelled whiskey on his breath, and that added to her unhappiness. If she questioned him, he would answer that he had had a kiddush with the pious Jews, his eyes twinkling at the lie. For the truth was that he always felt more at home in the cellar of the synagogue than upstairs in the presence of God, always at ease with the janitor, a goy, a Lett of some kind, who had been a sailor and an engineman, a drunkard with a song and a story on his shaven lips.

So another week passed before Fay could spend an evening with them, and during that week the old people, helped by Shirley, used hints, persuasion, cajolery to have Gert promise she would go to the recital. The old man took her by the hand and looking into her eyes fondly said, "Remember when you helped me as a child. I had to fix something for a tenant, you went along carrying a hammer or a wrench. Fix it so you go along with Faygele," and Gert answered, "Papa, I'll fix

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it if there isn't something doing at the union."

And again when Friday evening came around, the old ritual took place. After the house had been dusted and washed and polished from top to bottom, the old couple took their bath together, got into their holiday clothes, and sat down in the dim room near the Italian Renaissance table. They waited patiently while the girls got washed and filed down, led by Fay, who pressed the button, flooding the room, the signal for Essie to come in with her good evening and her tray. Again Fay insisted that Essie have tea with them, which the young woman did in an embarrassed fashion, sitting in her chair as if on the edge of a knife. Once more after her first sip, she was dismissed and excused from her dish washing when Fay remembered that she had to rush home for a rehearsal.

Only after the Negro woman had gone did the family speak up, and it was Gert who said, "Fay, you'll never learn!"

"Look who's talking. You don't care for Essie because she is cultured and light-skinned. The darker a Negro, the more Negro he is. The Negro you admire is the ignorant, dirty worker. The same with the Jew. The Jewish people can be destroyed if only a handful of Jewish workers are left. You and the workers!"

Gert saw the white, anxious faces of her parents and Shirley's plucking at her scarred throat. She contented herself with saying, "I got a close tolerance, Fay. The min. and the max. for me will always be the worker. You're damned right."

The old woman interposed, "Faygele, I like her. She is a good clean girl, but if it wasn't a church." Her eyes slid down to her worn hands. "You see, Faygele."

Fay twitched her shoulders. "But Essie said it is not being held in the church, in the chapel. In the hall there will be no crosses."

"It is a church, silly little one, and they will sing what is forbidden."

Wearily humped over his plate, the old man turned his sandy face toward her. "Why can't you go even if it is a church? A thousand churches and all the songs and dances in

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the world will never make you a goy. I'd go with you, but, no, I should stay home to watch the house, maybe somebody will run off with Faygele's flowers or a lesson will call up. Go with the girls. Shirley is going. Gertie also, I think." He looked appealingly at his youngest.

Gert said, "Papa, you miked me wrong. If there's nothing else doing that night, I'll go."

"See," cried the old man, brightening up, "you three will be stepping out as they say. Then go for once. See how it tastes. If you don't like it, you won't go out again. God will understand and forgive you."

"You and God. If you had spent more time in front of the Holy Ark instead of in the cellar—" The old woman stopped and faltered, "God forgive me."

The old man laughed. "Children, your mother will not stop until I become as holy as a ram's horn or the citron and the palm. The shool needed a new shamas, you know that. Your mother wanted me to apply for the job, but they picked Federbaum, a man almost my age. It is a small shool, said your mother, your friend the Lett does all the work. What does a shamas have to do? Well, when it is noisy during the prayers and the Jews let themselves go, all he has to do is bang on the table with his fists." And here the old man pounded the table the way the sexton did during prayers and bellowed, "Shah, Jews!"

As his great loose fist descended on the table, a glass of water was upset, wetting the turquoise green cloth.

"Ach." He jumped up in alarm.

"It'll dry," said Fay through tight lips.

"Fist I have," he groaned, "but where is the head?" He looked across the table. "Old woman, if only God weren't such a landlord."

Gert roared, Shirley gave her twittering laugh, while Fay patted her father patronizingly and protectively on the arm.

The old woman blinked at them like a hen at goslings whom she has reared only to have them taking to strange talk and swimming into all kinds of danger.

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Gert grinned. "I suppose I can take one evening off. All right, I go."

The look of fright faded from the old face. "Thank you, child," she murmured gratefully.

Shirley threw her arms around Gert, hugged and kissed her fervently, then blushed at the excess of emotion. The last time the girls had been together for an evening had been so long ago that she could not remember; it might have been in their childhood. For once they would be together and forget all unpleasantness, strains, the fear of losing the house, the problem of Fay's dwindling students. Perhaps they could have their mother eat with them that evening, use that to draw her, but Shirley shook her head with both hands as one shakes a clock that's stopped going. The old woman wouldn't think of having a drop of water out of the fastness of her home.

Whenever the old woman was cornered and forced, her reaction was to bury herself in work. As Essie did the housecleaning and Fay frowned on her digging in the garden, all that was left for her was the cooking. She cooked huge meals, went back to the traditional Jewish dishes. Fay had been trying for years to teach her American cooking, had considered getting Essie to come in every day and do the cooking, and had given up her plan reluctantly only after Shirley had insisted that "it would kill Mama: she's got to do something." The food did not agree with Shirley either, but she was willing to burn for her mother. As for Gert, she had a stomach that could digest anything, and she was indifferent as to how or what she ate.

Fay laughed when the fat noodle soup was served.

Shirley commented that their mother was working too hard, an evening out, say, an evening listening to a little music would do her good.

"I am not working hard," protested the old woman. "You want me I should sit like a baron."

"That evening I won't come home from the synagogue. I'll eat with my friend the Lett," said the old man.

"Am I a child, afraid of mice and bears?" she cried. "You

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talk and talk, all of you, until I don't know in which world I am." And then she paled, frightened at the rebellion in her voice.

Fay's fork clattered on the table. The skin tightened around her nose so that it turned white. She rose and stalked into the studio.

Fortunately, a new book on Chopin had arrived in the mail. It was in Polish which she read and spoke, having picked it up as a child from the Polish families that had lived in the house where her father had been a janitor. Fay considered Chopin the greatest of all composers. She compared the original with the translation which she had drawn from the library, made notes, and as she read, the bitter expression on her grated face vanished, her lips parted, and a patch of color came to her cheeks. She did not walk in the garden all night where the neighbors could notice her. She spent the night on the book.

After this flare-up, getting the old woman to go along was given up as hopeless. The girls agreed they would meet in front of the church. Afterwards they might go out together for a bite.

The evening of the musicale Fay was the first to appear in front of the church. She wore a large straw hat, her white gloves, and was dressed in a gray suit. The doors of the church were open, people were streaming in. It was a large building, plastered with a brown stucco which was peeling in places. The grounds were covered with crab grass. The fence with its palings looked as if it had been built from the sides of dry-goods boxes. Only the cross on the bell tower seemed new and gleamed golden in the setting sun.

The girls were late. Fay walked to the corner, her hands opening and closing as if she were doing her finger exercises, and then she turned and saw Gert striding down the street, hands in the pockets of her slacks, blouse open at the neck, a cigaret in the corner of her mouth.

"Shirley hasn't showed up yet. Now that's strange." She spat out her butt, got herself another cigaret; her fingers were brown from oil and nicotine stains. She searched in her trouser

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pockets for matches.

Fay said in disgust, "Couldn't you have worn a dress for once? And where's the sterling silver lighter I bought you as a birthday gift?"

Gert ignored her outburst, scratched a match with her thumb, cupped her hands, puffed the smoke through her nostrils and gave the church the once over.

A "hello" sounded behind them. Behold Shirley crossing the street escorting their mother who was wearing Fay's old mushroom hat and carrying a big black pocketbook which resembled a market bag.

"How did you do it?" shouted Gert, running up to catch Shirley's hand, which she pumped vigorously. She stepped back. "Boy, what makes you look so pretty tonight?" Shirley had strands of white in her hair which matched the milk-white of her skin and her simple white dress. "You look like you've just come out of the stove, like one of Mama's old kalah's—I mean chalehs." She caught herself as she stumbled over the Yiddish for Sabbath loaf and pronounced it as though it were the word for bride. "Yes, a man could tear a piece off."

"Don't be vulgar," said Fay through her teeth. She was highly pleased, however, with her mother's coming. She examined her critically. "But, Mama, your stocking is wrinkled!"

Shirley knelt in the street and took care of the wrinkled stocking. She smiled. "I went home to get dressed. I knew then that Mama would change her mind. Something in my heart told me." She choked up. "You know this is our old neighborhood. I said to Mama maybe we would get a chance to take a walk through the streets again."

"What are we waiting for? Mama, now that you are here don't look like a kapoor hindel," said Fay.

Led by Fay, Gert and Shirley flanking their mother, they marched into the lobby. They handed their tickets to the smiling doorman, who directed them to take the stairs. Shepherding their mother as if she were under protective custody, they moved down into the hall. The old woman sat down, breathing heavily, her face assuming a wooden look.



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The hall doubled as an auditorium and gymnasium. Up front there was a platform curtained off; on both sides against the walls there were cages for basketball, and several bucks and parallel bars. The chairs were folding chairs.

Fay's hooked nose with the spot on it like a grain wrinkled in disappointment. She looked sternly from under her broad-brimmed hat at the men and women filing in. They were Negroes, some of them in their work clothes. So far the girls and the old woman were the only white people present. There were tables in the rear around which there was much activity. "I wonder where Essie is. She said she'd look for us." She slipped off her gloves; her hands began their exercises.

Gert had risen to examine the apparatus against the walls. Several gangly boys were standing in back, laughing and gabbing and getting in the way of the women who were setting out cakes and preserves. Gert got into a conversation with the boys. She took out her cigarets and passed them around before returning to her seat.

The hall began filling up rapidly, but Shirley was dead to what was going on around her. Her eyes were moist, and there was a far-away look in them. "It's like—I just can't forget. Everything comes back, kids," she whispered to her sisters.

"Spare me the details," said Fay.

"What I remember is the cat smell," said Gert, turning as an usher came up to ask her please not to smoke. She crushed the cigaret between thumb and forefinger and dropped it at her feet.

The main had broken, and Shirley was being swept away, and as her sisters were little interested, she spoke to her mother. "Do you remember how we had trouble with the mice? One day you baked and Papa thought it was kimmel over your bread, but it was the mice. And Davey, he'd be twenty-five years old if he was alive, remember Davey's sickness and how they burned that sulfur candle in our two rooms in the cellar?"

Her eyes became suffused with tears, and she swallowed a sob. Fay threw her a sidelong look, and Gert muttered, "Hell,

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Shirley, why do you have to dig up what's best buried?"

"All right, I'll stop, but I just can't forget. I can't forget the convent across the street, the brewery down the block, and how Eve Metz, the one who had so much trouble with her family, ran into the convent and was given a home there. She became a nun. And when Mama slapped me, the only time she ever hit me, I remember it was when one of the nuns gave me a string of beads and a cross, a rosary. Do you remember, Mama?" She took the hand that had struck her and fondled it.

Her mother was looking across the aisle. There, directly opposite them, was a young Negro woman, who had just finished nursing her baby, first covering her breasts with a bandanna which her husband had given her. The rigid wooden look passed. The old woman's face seemed to loosen like a breast pulled out of a tight blouse. A gleam of understanding lit up her eyes. "Little mouse," she murmured.

A burst of applause from the audience greeted a short man who trotted up on the stage, pinching a cabbage butterfly of a bow tie and adjusting<sup>1</sup> his pince-nez. This was the pastor of Essie's church. The curtain rolled up, revealing the choir, the women in white middies and black skirts, the men ranged behind them in their Sunday best.

The little pastor beamed at them and started telling the story of the preacher who, at the end of a sermon delivered to the inmates of a jail, said: "Brethren, I sure am glad to see you all here. I hope to be with you next year." As the audience laughed and clapped appreciatively, he introduced the professor who had trained the choir, a successful piano teacher, so busy that he had to turn away pupils. Essie had spoken about him to Fay.

Fay watched him intently, her eyes under her floppy hat burning in her long, caked face. For the man, big, easy, affable, at home with his people, gave his comments on the musicians with wit and humor and then turned to his choir which he conducted while he played the piano in accompaniment.

The first composer whose work was played had worked his way through college as a janitor. When she heard janitor,

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the old woman shook her head and sighed, remembering the gaslight fluttering all day like a rotten leaf, the bugs big as mice, the night one of the Polish tenants went berserk with a butcher knife, and Gertie had wrestled him down and the old man had disarmed him, Gertie handling the ash cans every morning; and the time that Fay had the smallpox. . . .

"Is he a Jew, my child?" she asked as she pulled at Shirley's sleeve.

"The janitor who liked music so much?" Shirley examined the program notes and shook her head.

The old woman's shoulders sagged.

Fay reached out and straightened her mother's collar. "For God's sake don't look as stupid as a kapoor hindel. Must everybody be a Jew? Forget once you're one and it'll do your heart good. Please, do."

The old woman wrapped herself in her coat, drew a deep breath, and shut her eyes.

The music master tapped the stand with his baton. The whole audience seemed to move to the edge of their chairs when the choir rising as one burst into "Jesus Is a Rock." The Negroes in the audience—there was just a sprinkling of whites—swayed, their teeth shone, their eyes glowed. They lifted their voices ecstatically in praise of their great lord and savior.

In her bewilderment the old woman looked from one girl to the other. "What is it?" she faltered.

Shirley came out of her reverie. "That," she whispered, "is about Jesus. The music is nice. Listen to the music only. The words don't count."

The humming of the men and women in the audience grew louder, and soon the whole mass was chanting and rocking.

With a shudder the old woman pulled her mushroom hat down tight over her ears. "God punish me."

Shirley put her arms around her. "If you want to, I'll go out with you."

The old woman kneaded her hands, one in the other. "It isn't nice. In the middle of their song, you will hurt their feelings, child. Later, I'll go."

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She had to sit back and reconcile herself to listening to the praises of the man in whose name a furnace of horror had been built for her people for hundreds of years.

When the chant was over, a young woman came up on the stage to recite a poem, "On with the Soul," and then the pastor's wife rendered several solos.

The intermission followed, during which Shirley sat next to her mother, her eyes dreamy and moist, the tip of her tongue caught between her full lips. Once she stirred, took out her vanity case and dusted her face, looked about her and then again was lost in the past.

Gert went outside into the street and stood with a bunch of young men at the gate, smoking and chatting. Fay teetered around like a ship with too much sail, ready to keel over any second, trying to find Essie in the press in the rear where the tables were spread with pictures, needle work, cakes and preserves, the work of members of the congregation.

When the program resumed, a slim girl rose from the first row of the choir. Miss Alberta Smith sang "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child." The simple words repeated again and again trembled in the old woman's brain like birds in a cloud. A smile moistened her eyes. A kiend oohn a mama. This she understood. And then as she turned, she saw the baby sprawling in its mother's lap, bouncing about, waving its fists.

"Talk to her, talk to the wall," was her comment. "It will make cheese in the belly."

There were a number of other songs and solos by pupils of the music master, and then the program ended.

As the audience broke into applause, down the aisle came Essie. Bright-eyed, smiling, she offered her apologies. She had looked for them, but she was one of the coffee-makers and had to go out to the store to buy more coffee. Then her little girl was sleepy, and as her husband had to go to work, she had to dash back home and have a neighbor take care of the child. "How did you like it, Mrs. Moscow?" she asked.

"About the baby without a mother, I enjoyed. It tore the heart."

### *Three Sisters*

"Alberta Smith was raised an orphan. That's why she sung it with so much feeling."

The old woman sighed.

As they had been seated in front, they were delayed in getting out. While they waited, several of the young men started folding up the camp chairs and stacking them against the walls. A boy in a jersey darted in with a basketball and dribbled it across the floor.

The family had stopped at the door, and suddenly Gert shot across the floor and whipped the basketball away from him. With a grin, standing in mid-court, she shot for the basket and made it. The young Negroes applauded.

"You've got a team, haven't you? Who plays center? I'll jump against him."

A gangling youngster, grinning sheepishly, came to the center; the boy in the jersey stood between Gert and him and tossed the ball. Gert had kicked off her shoes, and squatting, she leaped high, hit the ball, and then ran rings around the boys, daring them to get it away from her. Then she stood in a circle with them and several others and passed the ball, whipping it hard, hitting them in the stomach.

Many of the audience stopped to laugh and nod their heads in approval. She got into her shoes and walked to the family, having worked up a sweat.

In the lobby stood the pastor with the straining little white bow tie, greeting his parishioners and their guests. Shirley smiled and the pastor shook hands cordially with her. The old woman looked on as if she were drugged and failed to acknowledge his bow.

In her halting fashion, Shirley explained, "We are Jewish people, sir. Essie Jones, one of your children, sold us the tickets. We've had a wonderful time, sir. I don't remember your church being in this neighborhood when we lived here more than twenty years ago. I remember when the first Negro family moved in. I—" She saw the expression in Fay's face and, becoming embarrassed, hesitated before adding, "We want to thank you for an enjoyable evening."

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The pastor bowed. "Thank you, thank you kindly, ma'am. Or is it miss?"

"You missed," said Gert. "We are all misses or near misses."

Out in the street Fay exploded. "Why did you have to say we are Jewish in such an apologetic way?"

"But I didn't, Fay," cried Shirley, blinking.

"What difference does it make what we are? And then 'Essie Jones, one of your children.'"

"If they call the priests fathers, are not the people children?" asked Shirley defensively.

The two continued walking toward the subway, Shirley trying to placate Fay. Some steps behind, guiding the little old woman, walked Gert, a cigaret in the corner of her lips, pleased by the way she had played rings around the boys.

Fay recovered her temper. She stopped in front of a restaurant. It was much too hot to eat dinner, but they could probably get frappes here; the treat would be on her.

Her mother said quickly, "This must be goyisch, Faygele."

"Mama, we'll order only frappes. Ice cream is ice cream."

The old woman looked doubtfully at her.

"I'm sick of this. This stinginess, this Jewishness is driving me crazy," she shrilled. "There isn't one minute we can get away from it. Haven't I had enough?" She brought her fist down hard on her bag and began beating it.

The old woman gasped and fell back a step.

Shirley chased after Fay, who had turned back and was heading wildly in the direction of the church.

"Mama," cried Gert, "you shouldn't have said anything to her. Don't you know her by this time?"

Shirley began calling from down the street. "I can't hold her, Gert. Help, Gert."

Gert raced up. "Snap out of it. Quick," she said sternly. She whipped her fingers across Fay's face and put her arms around her.

Caught in those strong arms, Fay buried her head against Gert's shoulder. Spasm after spasm shook her.

A taxi sped by. Gert put her fingers into her mouth and

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whistled shrilly. The driver swung around, stopped at the curb, looked curiously at them, and reaching out, opened the door. "Sick?" He nodded at Fay, who, head bent, got in first.

"Faygele, Faygele," whispered her mother fearfully.

Fay huddled in the corner.

The taxi lurched and went on.

"Faygele, child, you'll catch cold near the window. It is open."

Her jaw rigid, Fay moved closer to the window.

Shirley gave a guilty smile, touched the mushroom hat, patted the pocketbook which looked like a market bag. "Tell me, honest to God, Mama, how you liked it all, the whole thing, the being away from the pots one night."

Her mother's answer was a stifled sigh.

"Yes, Mama?"

The taxi stopped for a traffic light.

Gert spoke up in her husky voice. "How are you men doing these days?"

"It's a dog's life," said the driver without turning around.

"So geschafft's no good."

"Ulcers you get." The taxi shot ahead.

Even Gert did not have the heart to question him further, and again there was silence.

At last the old woman ventured timidly, apologetically like the kapoor hindel that she was. "The music was nice, children. Essie and her friends, they are good people." But before she could help it, out slipped, "But as I told you, it is a church."

"It's a taxicab," said Fay between tight jaws.

Shirley gave a nervous giggle. "Yes, Mama, the music is nice. The words don't mean anything. Listen." In her sweet voice breathlessly, she started singing one of the spirituals.

Gert stared at her, and then in her monotone, off key, she joined her, pounding at it, her stocky body behind it.

Fay turned away and stuffed her handkerchief between her teeth. And on the other side of the cab sat the old woman, her mouth open, no sound issuing, the mushroom hat bobbing over the dead wood of her face.



## *Firman Houghton*

### THE CRANE

I saw three boys at the beach's wavered edge  
Throw shells and shout their laughter at a crane.  
The gawk-legged bird stood still and swung his beak.  
His body was a thump, his neck a squeak.  
And then he ran. Each stilted step was pain.  
He waded as a child wades through a hedge.

And when it seemed that pogo-bird must tire,  
He lifted, slid from water into air.  
His body shape was reached out into flight,  
Just as an idle mind in swift delight  
May stretch to touch a fancy dimly there,  
And touching, find a moment catches fire.

Three boys were laughing on the ocean rim.  
The crane's long stalks of legs were slowly furled.  
Then, like a cloud that fits against the sky,  
This was a spirit planned and struck to fly.  
This straddler was a prince who owned a world.  
And one boy's laughter drooped. I watched with him.

*W. E. B. DuBois*

## A Negro Student at Harvard at the End of the 19th Century

HARVARD UNIVERSITY in 1888 was a great institution of learning. It was 238 years old and on its governing board were Alexander Agassiz, Phillips Brooks, Henry Cabot Lodge and Charles Francis Adams; and a John Quincy Adams, but not the ex-President. Charles William Eliot, a gentleman by training and a scholar by broad study and travel, was president. Among its teachers emeriti were Oliver Wendell Holmes and James Russell Lowell. Among the active teachers were Francis Child, Charles Eliot Norton, Justin Winsor and John Trowbridge; Frank Taussig, Nathaniel Shaler, George Palmer, William James, Francis Peabody, Josiah Royce, Barrett Wendell, Edward Channing and Albert Bushnell Hart. In 1890 arrived a young instructor, George Santayana. Seldom, if ever, has any American University had such a galaxy of great men and fine teachers as Harvard in the decade between 1885 and 1895.

To make my own attitude toward the Harvard of that day clear, it must be remembered that I went to Harvard as a Negro, not simply by birth, but recognizing myself as a member of a segregated caste whose situation I accepted. But I was determined to work from within that caste to find my way out.

The Harvard of which most white students conceived I knew little. I had not even heard of Phi Beta Kappa, and of such important social organizations as the Hasty Pudding Club, I knew nothing. I was in Harvard for education and not for high marks, except as marks would insure my staying. I did not pick out "snap" courses. I was there to enlarge my grasp of the meaning of the universe. We had had, for instance, no chemical

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laboratory at Fisk; our mathematics courses were limited. Above all I wanted to study philosophy! I wanted to get hold of the bases of knowledge, and explore foundations and beginnings. I chose, therefore, Palmer's course in ethics, but since Palmer was on sabbatical that year, William James replaced him, and I became a devoted follower of James at the time he was developing his pragmatic philosophy.

Fortunately I did not fall into the mistake of regarding Harvard as the beginning rather than the continuing of my college training. I did not find better teachers at Harvard, but teachers better known, who had had wider facilities for gaining knowledge and lived in a broader atmosphere for approaching truth.

I hoped to pursue philosophy as my life career, with teaching for support. With this program I studied at Harvard from the fall of 1888 to 1890, as undergraduate. I took a varied course in chemistry, geology, social science and philosophy. My salvation here was the type of teacher I met rather than the content of the courses. William James guided me out of the sterilities of scholastic philosophy to realist pragmatism; from Peabody's social reform with a religious tinge I turned to Albert Bushnell Hart to study history with documentary research; and from Taussig, with his reactionary British economics of the Ricardo school, I approached what was later to become sociology. Meantime Karl Marx was mentioned, but only incidentally and as one whose doubtful theories had long since been refuted. Socialism was dismissed as unimportant, as a dream of philanthropy or as a will-o-wisp of hotheads.

When I arrived at Harvard, the question of board and lodging was of first importance. Naturally, I could not afford a room in the college yard in the old and venerable buildings which housed most of the well-to-do students under the magnificent elms. Neither did I think of looking for lodgings among white families, where numbers of the ordinary students lived. I tried to find a colored home, and finally at 20 Flagg Street I came upon the neat home of a colored woman from Nova Scotia, a descendant of those black Jamaican Maroons whom Britain had

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deported after solemnly promising them peace if they would surrender. For a very reasonable sum I rented the second storey front room and for four years this was my home. I wrote of this abode at the time: "My room is, for a college man's abode, very ordinary indeed. It is quite pleasantly situated—second floor, front, with a bay window and one other window. . . . As you enter you will perceive the bed in the opposite corner, small and decorated with floral designs calculated to puzzle a botanist. . . . On the left hand is a bureau with a mirror of doubtful accuracy. In front of the bay window is a stand with three shelves of books, and on the left of the bureau is an improvised bookcase made of unpainted boards and uprights, containing most of my library of which I am growing quite proud. Over the heat register, near the door, is a mantle with a plaster of Paris pug-dog and a calendar, and the usual array of odds and ends. . . . On the wall are a few quite ordinary pictures. In this commonplace den I am quite content."

Following the attitudes which I had adopted in the South, I sought no friendships among my white fellow students, nor even acquaintanceships. Of course I wanted friends, but I could not seek them. My class was large—some three hundred students. I doubt if I knew a dozen of them. I did not seek them, and naturally they did not seek me. I made no attempt to contribute to the college periodicals since the editors were not interested in my major interests. But I did have a good singing voice and loved music, so I entered the competition for the Glee Club. I ought to have known that Harvard could not afford to have a Negro on its Glee Club travelling about the country. Quite naturally I was rejected.

I was happy at Harvard, but for unusual reasons. One of these was my acceptance of racial segregation. Had I gone from Great Barrington high school directly to Harvard, I would have sought companionship with my white fellows and been disappointed and embittered by a discovery of social limitations to which I had not been used. But I came by way of Fisk and the South and there I had accepted color caste and embraced eagerly the companionship of those of my own color. This was of course

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no final solution. Eventually, in mass assault, led by culture, we Negroes were going to break down the boundaries of race; but at present we were banded together in a great crusade, and happily so. Indeed, I suspect that the prospect of ultimate full human intercourse, without reservations and annoying distinctions, made me all too willing to consort with my own and to disdain and forget as far as was possible that outer, whiter world.

In general, I asked nothing of Harvard but the tutelage of teachers and the freedom of the laboratory and library. I was quite voluntarily and willingly outside its social life. I sought only such contacts with white teachers as lay directly in the line of my work. I joined certain clubs, like the Philosophical Club; I was a member of the Foxcroft dining club because it was cheap. James and one or two other teachers had me at their homes at meal and reception. I escorted colored girls to various gatherings, and as pretty ones as I could find to the vesper exercises, and later to the class day and commencement social functions. Naturally we attracted attention and the *Crimson* noted my girl friends. Sometimes the shadow of insult fell, as when at one reception a white woman seemed determined to mistake me for a waiter.

In general, I was encased in a completely colored world, self-sufficient and provincial, and ignoring just as far as possible the white world which conditioned it. This was self-protective coloration, with perhaps an inferiority complex, but with belief in the ability and future of black folk.

My friends and companions were drawn mainly from the colored students of Harvard and neighboring institutions, and the colored folk of Boston and surrounding towns. With them I led a happy and inspiring life. There were among them many educated and well-to-do folk, many young people studying or planning to study, many charming young women. We met and ate, danced and argued, and planned a new world.

Towards whites I was not arrogant; I was simply not obsequious, and to a white Harvard student of my day a Negro student who did not seek recognition was trying to be more

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than a Negro. The same Harvard man had much the same attitude toward Jews and Irishmen.

I was, however, exceptional among Negroes at Harvard in my ideas on voluntary race segregation. They for the most part saw salvation only in integration at the earliest moment and on almost any terms in white culture; I was firm in my criticism of white folk and in my dream of a self-sufficient Negro culture even in America.

This cutting of myself off from my white fellows, or being cut off, did not mean unhappiness or resentment. I was in my early manhood, unusually full of high spirits and humor. I thoroughly enjoyed life. I was conscious of understanding and power, and conceited enough still to imagine, as in high school, that they who did not know me were the losers, not I. On the other hand, I do not think that my white classmates found me personally objectionable. I was clean, not well-dressed but decently clothed. Manners I regarded as more or less superfluous and deliberately cultivated a certain brusquerie. Personal adornment I regarded as pleasant but not important. I was in Harvard, but not of it, and realized all the irony of my singing "Fair Harvard." I sang it because I liked the music, and not from any pride in the pilgrims.

With my colored friends I carried on lively social intercourse, but necessarily one which involved little expenditure of money. I called at their homes and ate at their tables. We danced at private parties. We went on excursions down the Bay. Once, with a group of colored students gathered from surrounding institutions, we gave Aristophanes' *The Birds* in a Boston colored church. The rendition was good, but not outstanding, not quite appreciated by the colored audience, but well worth doing. Even though it worked me near to death, I was proud of it.

Thus the group of professional men, students, white collar workers and upper servants, whose common bond was color of skin in themselves or in their fathers, together with a common history and current experience of discrimination, formed a unit that like many tens of thousands of like units across the nation

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had or were getting to have a common culture pattern which made them an interlocking mass, so that increasingly a colored person in Boston was more neighbor to a colored person in Chicago than to a white person across the street.

Mrs. Ruffin of Charles Street, Boston, and her daughter Birdie were often hostesses to this colored group. She was widow of the first colored judge appointed in Massachusetts, an aristocratic lady, with olive skin and high piled masses of white hair. Once a Boston white lady said to Mrs. Ruffin ingratiatingly: "I have always been interested in your race." Mrs. Ruffin flared: "Which race?" She began a national organization of colored women and published the *Courant*, a type of small colored weekly paper which was then spreading over the nation. In this I published many of my Harvard daily themes.

Naturally in this close group there grew up among the young people friendships ending in marriages. I myself, outgrowing the youthful attractions of Fisk, began serious dreams of love and marriage. There were, however, still my study plans to hold me back and there were curious other reasons. For instance, it happened that two of the girls whom I particularly liked had what was to me then the insuperable handicap of looking like whites, while they had enough black ancestry to make them "Negroes" in America. I could not let the world even imagine that I had married a white wife. Yet these girls were intelligent and companionable. One went to Vassar College, which then refused entrance to Negroes. Years later when I went there to lecture I remember disagreeing violently with a teacher who thought the girl ought not to have "deceived" the college by graduating before it knew of her Negro descent! Another favorite of mine was Deenie Pindell. She was a fine forthright woman, blonde, blue-eyed and fragile. In the end I had no chance to choose her, for she married Monroe Trotter.

Trotter was the son of a well-to-do colored father and entered Harvard in my first year in the Graduate School. He was thick-set, yellow, with close-cut dark hair. He was stubborn and strait-laced and an influential member of his class. He organized the first Total Abstinence Club in the Yard. I came



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to know him and joined the company when he and other colored students took in a trip to Amherst to see our friends Forbes and Lewis graduate in the class with Calvin Coolidge.

Lewis afterward entered the Harvard Law School and became the celebrated center rush of the Harvard football team. He married the beautiful Bessie Baker, who had been with us on that Amherst trip. Forbes, a brilliant, cynical dark man, later joined with Trotter in publishing the *Guardian*, the first Negro paper to attack Booker T. Washington openly. Washington's friends retorted by sending Trotter to jail when he dared to heckle Washington in a public Boston meeting on his political views. I was not present nor privy to this occurrence, but the unfairness of the jail sentence led me eventually to form the Niagara movement, which later became the NAACP.

Thus I lived near to life, love and tragedy; and when I met Maud Cuney, I became doubly interested. She was a tall, imperious brunette with gold-bronze skin, brilliant eyes and coils of black hair, daughter of the Collector of Customs at Galveston, Texas. She had come to study music and was a skilled performer. When the New England Conservatory of Music tried to "jim-crow" her in the dormitory, we students rushed to her defense and we won. I fell deeply in love with her, and we were engaged.

Thus it is clear how in the general social intercourse on the campus I consciously missed nothing. Some white students made themselves known to me and a few, a very few, became life-long friends. Most of my classmates I knew neither by sight nor name. Among them many made their mark in life: Norman Hapgood, Robert Herrick, Herbert Croly, George Dorsey, Homer Folks, Augustus Hand, James Brown Scott, and others. I knew none of these intimately. For the most part I do not doubt that I was voted a somewhat selfish and self-centered "grind" with a chip on my shoulder and a sharp tongue.

Only once or twice did I come to the surface of college life. First I found by careful calculation that I needed the cash of one of the Boylston prizes in oratory to piece out my year's expenses. I got it through winning a second oratorical prize. The

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occasion was noteworthy by the fact that another black student, Clement Morgan, got first prize at the same contest.

With the increase at Harvard of students who had grown up outside New England, there arose at this time a certain resentment at the way New England students were dominating and conducting college affairs. The class marshal on commencement day was always a Saltonstall, a Cabot, a Lowell, or from some such New England family. The crew and most of the heads of other athletic teams were selected from similarly limited social groups. The class poet, class orator, and other commencement officials invariably were selected because of family and not for merit. It so happened that when the officials of the class of 1890 were being selected in early spring, a plot ripened. Personally, I knew nothing of it and was not greatly interested. But in Boston and in the Harvard Yard the result of the elections was of tremendous significance, for this conspiratorial clique selected Clement Morgan as class orator. New England and indeed the whole country reverberated.

Morgan was a black man. He had been working in a barber shop in St. Louis at the time when he ought to have been in school. With the encouragement and help of a colored teacher, whom he later married, he came to Boston and entered the Latin School. This meant that when he finally entered Harvard, he entered as freshman in the orthodox way and was well acquainted with his classmates. He was fairly well received, considering his color. He was a pleasant unassuming person and one of the best speakers of clearly enunciated English on the campus. In his junior year he had earned the first Boylston prize for oratory in the same contest where I won second prize. It was, then, logical for him to become class orator, and yet this was against all the traditions of America. There were editorials in the leading newspapers, and the South especially raged and sneered at the audience of "black washerwomen" who would replace Boston society at the next Harvard commencement.

Morgan's success was contagious, and that year and the next in several leading Northern colleges colored students became the class orators. Ex-President Hayes, as I shall relate later,

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sneered at this fact. While, as I have said, I had nothing to do with the plot, and was not even present at the election which chose Morgan, I was greatly pleased at this breaking of the color line, Morgan and I became fast friends and spent a summer giving readings along the North Shore to defray our college costs.

Harvard of this day was a great opportunity for a young man and a young American Negro and I realized it. I formed habits of work rather different from those of most of the other students. I burned no midnight oil. I did my studying in the daytime and had my day parceled out almost to the minute. I spent a great deal of time in the library and did my assignments with thoroughness and with prevision of the kind of work I wanted to do later. From the beginning my relations with most of the teachers at Harvard were pleasant. They were on the whole glad to receive a serious student, to whom extracurricular activities were not of paramount importance, and one who in a general way knew what he wanted.

Harvard had in the social sciences no such leadership of thought and breadth of learning as in philosophy, literature and physical science. She was then groping and is still groping toward a scientific treatment of human action. She was facing at the end of the century a tremendous economic era. In the United States, finance was succeeding in monopolizing transportation and raw materials like sugar, coal and oil. The power of the trust and combine was so great that the Sherman Act was passed in 1890. On the other hand, the tariff, at the demand of manufacturers, continued to rise in height from the McKinley to the indefensible Wilson tariff, making that domination easier. The understanding between the Industrial North and the New South was being perfected and, beginning in 1890, a series of disfranchising laws was enacted by the Southern states that was destined in the next sixteen years to make voting by Southern Negroes practically impossible. A financial crisis shook the land in 1893 and popular discontent showed itself in the Populist movement and Coxey's Army. The whole question of the burden of taxation began to be discussed.

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These things we discussed with some clearness and factual understanding at Harvard. The tendency was toward English free trade and against the American tariff policy. We revered Ricardo and wasted long hours on the "Wages-fund." I remember Taussig's course supporting dying Ricardean economics. Wages came from what employers had left for labor after they had subtracted their own reward. Suppose that this profit was too small to attract the employer, what would the poor worker do but starve! The trusts and monopolies were viewed frankly as dangerous enemies of democracies, but at the same time as inevitable methods of industry. We were strong for the gold standard and fearful of silver. On the other hand, the attitude of Harvard toward labor was on the whole contemptuous and condemnatory. Strikes like that of the anarchists in Chicago and the railway strikes of 1886, the terrible Homestead strike of 1892 and Coxey's Army of 1894 were pictured as ignorant lawlessness, lurching against conditions largely inevitable.

Karl Marx was mentioned only to point out how thoroughly his theses had been disproven; of the theory itself almost nothing was said. Henry George was given but tolerant notice. The anarchists of Spain, the Nihilists of Russia, the British miners—all these were viewed not as part of political and economic development but as sporadic evil. This was natural. Harvard was the child of its era. The intellectual freedom and flowering of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were yielding to the deadening economic pressure which would make Harvard rich but reactionary. This defender of wealth and capital, already half ashamed of Sumner and Phillips, was willing finally to replace an Eliot with a manufacturer and a nervous warmonger. The social community that mobbed Garrison easily electrocuted Sacco and Vanzetti.

It was not until I was long out of college and had finished my first studies of economics and politics that I realized the fundamental influence man's efforts to earn a living had upon all his other efforts. The politics which we studied in college were conventional, especially when it came to describing and

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elucidating the current scene in Europe. The Queen's Jubilee in June, 1887, while I was still at Fisk, set the pattern of our thinking. The little old woman at Windsor became a magnificent symbol of Empire. Here was England with her flag draped around the world, ruling more black folk than white and leading the colored peoples of the earth to Christian baptism, and, as we assumed, to civilization and eventual self-rule. In 1885, Stanley, the traveling American reporter, became a hero and symbol of white world leadership in Africa. The wild, fierce fight of the Mahdi and the driving of the English out of the Sudan for thirteen years did not reveal their inner truth to me. I heard only of the martyrdom of the drunken Bible-reader and free-booter, Chinese Gordon.

After the Congo Free State was established, the Berlin Conference of 1885 was reported to be an act of civilization against the slave trade and liquor. French, English and Germans pushed on in Africa, but I did not question the interpretation which pictured this as the advance of civilization and the benevolent tutelage of barbarians. I read of the confirmation of the Triple Alliance in 1891. Later I saw the celebration of the renewed Triple Alliance on the Tempelhofer Feld, with the new young Emperor Wilhelm II, who, fresh from his dismissal of Bismarck, led the splendid pageantry; and, finally, the year I left Germany, Nicholas II became Czar of all the Russias. In all this I had not yet linked the political development of Europe with the race problem in America.

I was repeatedly a guest in the home of William James; he was my friend and guide to clear thinking; as a member of the Philosophical Club I talked with Royce and Palmer; I remember vividly once standing beside Mrs. Royce at a small reception. We ceased conversation for a moment and both glanced across the room. Professor Royce was opposite talking excitedly. He was an extraordinary sight: a little body, indifferently clothed; a big red-thatched head and blazing blue eyes. Mrs. Royce put my thoughts into words: "Funny-looking man, isn't he?" I nearly fainted! Yet I knew how she worshipped him.

I sat in an upper room and read Kant's *Critique* with Santa-

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yana; Shaler invited a Southerner, who objected to sitting beside me, to leave his class; he said he wasn't doing very well, anyway. I became one of Hart's favorite pupils and was afterwards guided by him through my graduate course and started on my work in Germany. Most of my courses of study went well. It was in English that I came nearest my Waterloo at Harvard. I had unwittingly arrived at Harvard in the midst of a violent controversy about poor English among students. A number of fastidious scholars like Barrett Wendell, the great pundit of Harvard English, had come to the campus about this time; moreover, New England itself was getting sensitive over western slang and southern drawls and general ignorance of grammar. Freshmen at this time could elect nearly all their courses except English; that was compulsory, with daily themes, theses, and tough examinations. But I was at the point in my intellectual development when the content rather than the form of my writing was to me of prime importance. Words and ideas surged in my mind and spilled out with disregard of exact accuracy in grammar, taste in word or restraint in style. I knew the Negro problem and this was more important to me than literary form. I knew grammar fairly well, and I had a pretty wide vocabulary; but I was bitter, angry and intemperate in my first thesis. Naturally my English instructors had no idea of nor interest in the way in which Southern attacks on the Negro were scratching me on the raw flesh. Tillman was raging like a beast in the Senate, and literary clubs, especially those of rich and well-dressed women, engaged his services eagerly and listened avidly. Senator Morgan of Alabama had just published a scathing attack on "niggers" in a leading magazine, when my first Harvard thesis was due. I let go at him with no holds barred. My long and blazing effort came back marked "E"—not passed!

It was the first time in my scholastic career that I had encountered such a failure. I was aghast, but I was not a fool. I did not doubt but that my instructors were fair in judging my English technically even if they did not understand the Negro problem. I went to work at my English and by the end of that



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term had raised it to a "C." I realized that while style is subordinate to content, and that no real literature can be composed simply of meticulous and fastidious phrases, nevertheless solid content with literary style carries a message further than poor grammar and muddled syntax. I elected the best course on the campus for English composition—English 12.

I have before me a theme which I submitted on October 3, 1890 to Barrett Wendell. I wrote: "Spurred by my circumstances, I have always been given to systematically planning my future, not indeed without many mistakes and frequent alterations, but always with what I now conceive to have been a strangely early and deep appreciation of the fact that to live is a serious thing. I determined while in high school to go to college—partly because other men did, partly because I foresaw that such discipline would best fit me for life. . . . I believe, foolishly perhaps, but sincerely, that I have something to say to the world, and I have taken English 12 in order to say it well." Barrett Wendell liked that last sentence. Out of fifty essays, he picked this out to read to the class.

Commencement was approaching, when, one day, I found myself at midnight on one of the swaggering streetcars that used to roll out from Boston on its way to Cambridge. It was in the spring of 1890, and quite accidentally I was sitting by a classmate who would graduate with me in June. As I dimly remember, he was a nice-looking young man; well-dressed, almost dapper, charming in manner. Probably he was rich or at least well-to-do, and doubtless belonged to an exclusive fraternity, although that did not interest me. Indeed I have even forgotten his name. But one thing I shall never forget and that was his rather regretful admission (which slipped out as we gossiped) that he had no idea as to what his life work would be, because, as he added, "There's nothing in which I am particularly interested!"

I was more than astonished—I was almost outraged to meet any human being of the mature age of twenty-one who did not have his life all planned before him, at least in general outline, and who was not supremely, if not desperately, interested in



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what he planned to do.

In June 1890, I received my bachelor's degree from Harvard *cum laude* in philosophy. I was one of the five graduating students selected to speak at commencement. My subject was "Jefferson Davis." I chose it with the deliberate intent of facing Harvard and the nation with a discussion of slavery as illustrated in the person of the president of the Confederate States of America. Naturally, my effort made a sensation. I said, among other things: "I wish to consider not the man, but the type of civilization which his life represented: its foundation is the idea of the strong man—Individualism coupled with the rule of might—and it is this idea that has made the logic of even modern history, the cool logic of the Club. It made of a naturally brave and generous man, Jefferson Davis, one who advanced civilization by murdering Indians; then a hero of a national disgrace, called by courtesy the Mexican War; and finally, as the crowning absurdity, the peculiar champion of a people fighting to be free in order that another people should not be free. Whenever this idea has for a moment escaped from the individual realm, it has found an even more secure foothold in the policy and philosophy of the State. The strong man and his mighty Right Arm has become the Strong Nation with its armies. However, under whatever guise a Jefferson Davis may appear as man, as race, or as a nation, his life can only logically mean this: the advance of a part of the world at the expense of the whole; the overwhelming sense of the I, and the consequent forgetting of the Thou. It has thus happened that advance in civilization has always been handicapped by shortsighted national selfishness. The vital principle of division of labor has been stifled not only in industry, but also in civilization; so as to render it well-nigh impossible for a new race to introduce a new idea into the world except by means of the cudgel. To say that a nation is in the way of civilization is a contradiction in terms, and a system of human culture whose principle is the rise of one race on the ruins of another is a farce and a lie. Yet this is the type of civilization which Jefferson Davis represented: it represents a field for stalwart manhood and heroic

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character, and at the same time for moral obtuseness and refined brutality. These striking contradictions of character always arise when a people seemingly become convinced that the object of the world is not civilization, but Teutonic civilization."

A Harvard professor wrote to *Kate Field's Washington*, then a leading periodical: "Du Bois, the colored orator of the commencement stage, made a ten-strike. It is agreed upon by all the people I have seen that he was the star of the occasion. His paper was on 'Jefferson Davis,' and you would have been surprised to hear a colored man deal with him so generously. Such phrases as a 'great man,' a 'keen thinker,' a 'strong leader,' and others akin occurred in the address. One of the trustees of the University told me yesterday that the paper was considered masterly in every way. Du Bois is from Great Barrington, Massachusetts, and doubtless has some white blood in his veins. He, too, has been in my classes the past year. If he did not head the class, he came pretty near the head, for he is an excellent scholar in every way, and altogether the best black man that has come to Cambridge."

Bishop Potter of New York wrote in the *Boston Herald*: "When at the last commencement of Harvard University, I saw a young colored man appear . . . and heard his brilliant and eloquent address, I said to myself: 'Here is what an historic race can do if they have a clear field, a high purpose, and a resolute will.'"

Already I had now received more education than most young white men, having been almost continuously in school from the age of six to twenty-two. But I did not yet feel prepared. I felt that to cope with the new and extraordinary situations then developing in the United States and the world I needed to go further and that as a matter of fact I had just well begun my training in knowledge of social conditions.

I revelled in the keen analysis of William James, Josiah Royce and young George Santayana. But it was James with his pragmatism and Albert Bushnell Hart with his research method who turned me back from the lovely but sterile land of philosophic speculation to the social sciences as the field for

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gathering and interpreting that body of fact which would apply to my program for the Negro. As undergraduate, I had talked frankly with William James about teaching philosophy, my major subject. He discouraged me, but not by any means because of my record in his classes. He used to give me "A's" and even "A-plus," but as he said candidly, there is "not much chance of anyone earning a living as a philosopher." He was repeating just what Chase of Fisk had said a few years previously.

I knew by this time that practically my sole chance of earning a living combined with study was to teach, and after my work with Hart in United States history I conceived the idea of applying philosophy to an historical interpretation of race relations. In other words, I was trying to take my first steps toward sociology as the science of human action. It goes without saying that no such field of study was then recognized at Harvard or came to be recognized for twenty years after. But I began with some research in Negro history and finally at the suggestion of Hart, I chose the suppression of the African slave trade to America as my doctor's thesis. Then came the question as to whether I could continue study in the graduate school. I had no resources in wealth or friends. I applied for a fellowship in the graduate school of Harvard, was appointed Henry Bromfield Rogers fellow for a year and later the appointment was renewed; so that from 1890 to 1892 I was a fellow in Harvard University, studying history and political science and what would have been sociology if Harvard had yet recognized such a field.

I finished the first draft of my thesis and delivered an outline of it at the seminars of American history and political economy December 7, 1891. I received my master's degree in the spring. I was thereupon elected to the American Historical Society and asked to speak in Washington at their meeting in December, 1892. The *New York Independent* noted this among the "three best papers presented," and continued:

The article upon the "enforcement of the Slave Laws" was written and read by a black man. It was thrilling when one could, for a moment, turn his thoughts from listening to think that scarcely thirty years have

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elapsed since the war that freed his race, and here was an audience of white men listening to a black man—listening, moreover, to a careful, cool, philosophical history of the laws which had not prevented the enslavement of his race. The voice, the diction, the manner of the speaker were faultless. As one looked at him, one could not help saying, "Let us not worry about the future of our country in the matter of race distinctions."

I had begun with a bibliography of Nat Turner and ended with a history of the suppression of the African slave trade to America; neither would need to be done again, at least in my day. Thus in my quest for basic knowledge with which to help guide the American Negro, I came to the study of sociology, by way of philosophy and history rather than by physics and biology. After hesitating between history and economics, I chose history. On the other hand, psychology, hovering then on the threshold of experiment under Muensterberg, soon took a new orientation which I could understand from the beginning.

Already I had made up my mind that what I needed was further training in Europe. The German universities were at the top of their reputation. Any American scholar who wanted preferment went to Germany for study. The faculties of Johns Hopkins and the new University of Chicago were beginning to be filled with German Ph.D.'s, and even Harvard, where Kuno Frank had long taught, had imported Muensterberg. British universities did not recognize American degrees and French universities made no special effort to encourage American graduates. I wanted then to study in Germany. I was determined that any failure on my part to become a recognized American scholar must not be based on lack of modern training.

I was confident. So far I had met no failure. I willed and lo! I was walking beneath the elms of Harvard—the name of allurements, the college of my youngest, wildest visions! I needed money; scholarships and prizes fell into my lap—not all I wanted or strove for, but all I needed to keep me in school. Commencement came, and standing before governor, president, and grave gowned men, I told them certain truths, waving my arms and breathing fast! They applauded with what may have seemed to many as uncalled-for fervor, but I walked home on

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pink clouds of glory! I asked for a fellowship and got it. I announced my plan of studying in Germany, but Harvard had no more fellowships for me. A friend, however, told me of the Slater Fund and that the Board was looking for colored men worth educating.

No thought of modest hesitation occurred to me. I rushed at the chance. It was one of those tricks of fortune which always seem partly due to chance. In 1882, the Slater Fund for the education of Negroes had been established and the board in 1890 was headed by ex-President R. B. Hayes. Ex-President Hayes went down to Johns Hopkins University, which admitted no Negro students, and told a "darkey" joke in a frank talk about the plans of the fund. The *Boston Herald* of November 2, 1890 quoted him as saying: "If there is any young colored man in the South whom we find to have a talent for art or literature or any special aptitude for study, we are willing to give him money from the educational funds to send him to Europe or give him advanced education." He added that so far they had been able to find only "orators." This seemed to me a nasty fling at my black classmate, Morgan, who had been Harvard class orator a few months earlier.

The Hayes statement was brought to my attention at a card party one evening; it not only made me good and angry but inspired me to write ex-President Hayes and ask for a scholarship. I received a pleasant reply saying that the newspaper quotation was incorrect; that his board had some such program in the past but had no present plans for such scholarships. I responded referring him to my teachers and to others who knew me, and intimating that his change of plan did not seem to me fair nor honest. He wrote again in apologetic mood and said that he was sorry the plan had been given up, that he recognized that I was a candidate who might otherwise have been given attention. I then sat down and wrote Mr. Hayes this letter:

May 25, 1891

Your favor of the 2nd. is at hand. I thank you for your kind wishes. You will pardon me if I add a few words of explanation as to my application. The outcome of the matter is as I expected it would be. The an-

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nouncement that any agency of the American people was willing to give a Negro a thoroughly liberal education and that it had been looking in vain for men to educate was to say the least rather startling. When the newspaper clipping was handed me in a company of friends, my first impulse was to make in some public way a categorical statement denying that such an offer had ever been made known to colored students. I saw this would be injudicious and fruitless, and I therefore determined on the plan of applying myself. I did so and have been refused along with a "number of cases" beside mine.

As to my case, I personally care little. I am perfectly capable of fighting alone for an education if the trustees do not see fit to help me. On the other hand the injury you have—unwittingly I trust—done the race I represent, and are not ashamed of, is almost irreparable. You went before a number of keenly observant men who looked upon you as an authority in the matter, and told them in substance that the Negroes of the United States either couldn't or wouldn't embrace a most liberal opportunity for advancement. That statement went all over the country. When now finally you receive three or four applications for the fulfillment of that offer, the offer is suddenly withdrawn, while the impression still remains.

If the offer was an experiment, you ought to have had at least one case before withdrawing it; if you have given aid before (and I mean here toward liberal education—not toward training plowmen) then your statement at Johns Hopkins was partial. From the above facts I think you owe an apology to the Negro people. We are ready to furnish competent men for every European scholarship furnished us off paper. But we can't educate ourselves on nothing and we can't have the moral courage to try, if in the midst of our work our friends turn public sentiment against us by making statements which injure us and which they cannot stand by.

That you have been looking for men to liberally educate in the past may be so, but it is certainly strange so few have heard it. It was never mentioned during my three years stay at Fisk University. President Price of Livingstone, [then a leading Negro spokesman] has told me that he never heard of it, and students from various other Southern schools have expressed great surprise at the offer. The fact is that when I was wanting to come to Harvard, while yet in the South, I wrote to Dr. Haygood, [Atticus G. Haygood, a leader of Southern white liberals], for a loan merely, and he never even answered my letter. I find men willing to help me thro' cheap theological schools, I find men willing to help me

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use my hands before I have got my brains in working order, I have an abundance of good wishes on hand, but I never found a man willing to help me get a Harvard Ph.D.

Hayes was stirred. He promised to take up the matter the next year with the board. Thereupon, the next year I proceeded to write the board: "At the close of the last academic year at Harvard, I received the degree of Master of Arts, and was re-appointed to my fellowship for the year 1891-92. I have spent most of the year in the preparation of my doctor's thesis on the Suppression of the Slave Trade in America. I prepared a preliminary paper on this subject and read it before the American Historical Association at its annual meeting at Washington during the Christmas holidays. . . . Properly to finish my education, careful training in a European university for at least a year is, in my mind and the minds of my professors, absolutely indispensable." I thereupon asked respectfully "aid to study at least a year abroad under the direction of the graduate department of Harvard or other reputable auspices" and if this was not practicable, "that the board loan me a sufficient sum for this purpose." I did not of course believe that this would get me an appointment, but I did think that possibly through the influence of people who thus came to know about my work, I might somehow borrow or beg enough to get to Europe.

I rained recommendations upon Mr. Hayes. The Slater Fund Board surrendered, and I was given a fellowship of \$750 to study a year abroad, with the promise that it might possibly be renewed for a second year. To salve their souls, however, this grant was made half as gift and half as repayable loan with 5% interest. I remember rushing down to New York and talking with ex-President Hayes in the old Astor House, and emerging walking on air. I saw an especially delectable shirt in a shop window. I went in and asked about it. It cost three dollars, which was about four times as much as I had ever paid for a shirt in my life; but I bought it.



## *Sonya Dorman*

### STORM IN GLOUCESTER

That was some morning when  
the waters rose up rushing  
like a mountain coming to a prophet.  
Boy, prophet, beast and woman  
all turned over like kindling  
and danced a wet waltz  
to the violin of the wind.  
Birds fell over the railing  
of the widows' walks,  
and the widows locked their doors  
but stood at the blinded windows.  
There was one trawler outside  
and a coast guard station ashore;  
in between such a rage of water  
that fish could scarcely pass,  
let alone the hooligan navy.  
But they watched. They almost heard  
the grind and crunch on the reef,  
and the poor boys drowning in the drink.

By evening it had blown down and the harbor  
winked pale and sharp as a clean platter.  
On the rooftree of an old house a snow owl  
sat blinking in amazement, blown off  
his course for sure. A boy said,  
"Hola, que lindo. But it's a ghost,  
it looks like Jack from the trawler.  
And you won't catch me outside  
in such a terrible storm."  
But that's what Jack had said,  
and his ghost flew away to the north.

## Kenneth O. Hanson

### THE PROVINCES

Between his "On the one hand  
on the other" grows  
the pied magician's rose.  
Bare stage, three objects, so.  
A matter of technique.

We praise the skill  
although we know his every trick—  
pure gesture whose repose  
from the astonished wire  
brings forth a practiced rose  
and then the curtain falls.

We say the meaning lies beyond.  
In that dead silence backstage,  
stripped of tricks, the best  
magician must become himself  
the rose unblossom  
and the crew go home.

Cramped in his gesture,  
poised like a dancer  
days and weeks while  
endlessly the curtain falls—  
we say the stage magician knows  
himself the product of the act,  
a skilled rehearsal of the rose.

Why should his own good time  
bring down the house?  
Why should he choose applause?  
Worn petals on a wire—  
this fraud we understand.

Did not the melancholy rose  
for all its daring dew *depend*  
on that deceitful stem,  
what would we make of him  
whose every night the curtain rises  
on perfect surprises?

*George Goodwin, Jr.*

## The Last Hurrahs: George Apley and Frank Skeffington

MASSACHUSETTS POLITICAL HISTORY found a turning-point in 1958. Changes in party competition and party membership, though they had been in the making for years, became clearly evident for the first time. Since the Civil War, Massachusetts had passed from a one-party Republican state to a state with vigorous two-party competition. In 1958, the Democratic party gained control of both the Executive and Legislative branches of the Commonwealth, for the first time in over 100 years. During the same period, the Democratic party had become almost a monopoly of the Irish, the Republican party a Yankee monopoly. In 1958, the Republicans nominated George Fingold, a non-Yankee, for governor\*—the first time they looked outside of the dominant membership group to recruit a candidate for the top of the state ticket. To have this happen in the same year that the Democrats renominated Foster Furcolo for governor was a clear sign that the Republican-Yankee, Democratic-Irish monopolies were breaking up and that the "newer races," as James Michael Curley used to call them, were coming into their own. Massachusetts politics can never be quite the same again. Just what the politics of the state has been and what it is likely to become are matters of absorbing interest.

Much of what is unique in Massachusetts politics stems from the fact that the state received an overwhelming proportion of Irish immigrants, thanks to inexpensive transportation directly from Liverpool to Boston. (Other coastal states received proportionate shares of immigrants, but from a greater number of

\* The Republican nominee died shortly after the convention.

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European countries and a greater variety of backgrounds.) In the mid-nineteenth century, the Yankee culture was rationalistic and liberal and it could neither welcome nor absorb this influx of people who were Roman Catholic in religion and conservative in political philosophy. The state was divided into two separate cultures, and each went its own way politically—the Yankees to the Republican party and the Irish to the Democratic party. Politics became a factor in widening the gap rather than in bridging it. Only gradually did immigrants from other parts of Europe reach a position in strength and numbers to be able to challenge this two-way division.

Two novelists, John P. Marquand, a Yankee, and Edwin O'Connor, an Irishman, have been skillful in painting the human background for this political history. Their books, *The Late George Apley* and *The Last Hurrah*,\* are satirical, but they also treat their heroes with sympathy and understanding. Neither Apley nor Frank Skeffington (of *The Last Hurrah*) needs to be taken as truly representative of his kind and neither portrays any real person. (The late James Curley first threatened suit and then proudly claimed a resemblance to Skeffington, but any reader of his autobiography, *I'd Do It Again*, must realize that the two really had little in common.) Yet, taken together, they help to explain much that is unique in Massachusetts politics.

George Apley, in writing a family history for his children, cites two events which have shaped the state's history. He speaks of 1636, when the Apleys came to this country, as a date which "coincides with the great period of emigration from the mother country, not of persons struggling to find a new home because of poverty, like the starving Irish who overwhelmed us in the middle of the last century, but of solid citizens, many with substantial properties, who desired to take up a new abode because of conscience." Frank Skeffington speaks from the other side of the tracks:

A hundred years ago the sons and daughters of the first white inhabitants went to bed one lovely evening, and by the time that they woke

\* John P. Marquand, *The Late George Apley* (Boston, 1937); Edwin O'Connor, *The Last Hurrah* (Boston, 1956).

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up and rubbed their eyes, their charming old city was swollen to three times its size. The savages had arrived. Not the Indians; far worse. It was the Irish. They had arrived and they wanted in. Even worse than that, they got in. The story of how they got in may not be a particularly pretty one on either side, but I doubt if anyone would deny that it was exciting and, as I say, unique.

The presence of the Irish has subtly shaped all George Apley's actions and ideas. It reinforces his sense of class and family, and heightens his puritan sense of duty. His prescription for the distribution of income is that "half should be reinvested annually. The remaining half should be divided between living expenses and charity." He writes of the 1929 depression that "good always comes out of these panics, and this should show our working people how necessary it is to save in good times." The Irish are not only on the receiving end of his charity but also of his attempts to enforce higher standards of honesty and morality. A strong sense of responsibility leads him into various private and political reform movements. Of these he comments, "I neither like nor enjoy what I am doing . . . but I find this to be my duty. . . ." Above all else, he places the utmost value on the fact "that family is more important than individual, that a family must be solid before the world, no matter what the faults may be of a single member, that a family has a heritage to hand down which must be protected."

The increasing political role of the Irishman was a source of great worry to the Apleys. One day toward the end of the nineteenth century his father had said:

You appear worried for the aptitude shown here by 'Paddy' in politics. I cannot share this alarm; instead I am quite willing that he should interest himself in municipal affairs as long as there is a firm hand at the top, which I am sure is the case at present.

But he had begun to show concern toward the end of his life:

. . . affairs will always be controlled by a small group. I and my group have controlled them, but you young men are all weak. It is not a pleasant thing for me to feel that the Irish are going to run the affairs of this city, and I do not see anyone in your generation who has the force and skill to guide them.

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Apley himself seems as preoccupied with the Irish question as the Mississippi white must be today with the role of the Negro.

Frank Skeffington is one of the Irish who take over control from the Apleys. His approach to life is as much shaped by the two-way religious and ethnic split as is Apley's. Nathaniel Gardiner, a Yankee of more than average objectivity, comments on this when he tries to characterize Skeffington to his son:

I think that as an elected public official he has been dishonest, partial to his own, and vindictive to others; but I should also like to remind you that perhaps there might have been some reason for all the partiality and vindictiveness. They didn't spring from a vacuum, you know. I know something about Skeffington's early life in this city; it wasn't very agreeable. He had rather a hard time of it, and so did his family and most other families like it; I'm afraid some of us didn't help matters much. And so, because Skeffington has an excellent memory, there was a certain amount of revenge.

Skeffington is not above exploiting ethnic and religious antagonisms to his own political advantage:

I'm not just an elected official . . . I'm a tribal chieftain as well. It's a necessary kind of dual office-holding, you might say; without the second, I wouldn't be the first.

Skeffington and Apley are very different. Politics is a way of life which Skeffington pursues with great zest, while Apley merely plays around the edges of politics from a sense of civic duty, with great reluctance and considerable naiveté. Apley has great faith in the human nature of his own class, although he expects little from others. Skeffington is cynical about human nature in general, claiming that he feels safe only if the ties of friendship are "fortified with finance."

It is clear that the party of the Apleys—the Republican party—captured the imagination of the voters of Massachusetts during the Civil War, and held it until relatively recently. It was a worthy party, judging by the caliber of its leaders as well as by the nature of its accomplishments. The party had an almost British approach to the public service, and worked out a regular pattern of political advancement for its promising members. Perhaps the most noteworthy example is the career

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of Calvin Coolidge. From 1899 to 1929 he held elective office, first as a Northampton official, then as a member of the state House of Representatives, state Senator, President of the Senate, Lieutenant-Governor, and Governor. His particular career ladder led him to the Presidency of the United States—the first Massachusetts man to be so distinguished since John Quincy Adams. The party's elected officials have held nationwide reputations—such men as Congressmen Robert Luce, Louis Frothingham and Joseph Martin; Governors Samuel McCall, Alvin Fuller and Christian Herter; and Senators Charles Sumner, George Frisbie Hoar, Henry Cabot Lodge, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., and Leverett Saltonstall. Republicans frequently have shown an interest in reform. Massachusetts has led other states in welfare and labor promotion, and in the development of professionalized state services. Studies of the development of such governmental functions as education, police, health and correction give credit to Massachusetts pioneering.

The Democratic party in Massachusetts was not able to show signs of solid, continuing electoral strength until the midnineteen-twenties. The hard core membership of the party has been Irish. Occasionally Democratic candidates benefited from dissatisfaction with particular Republican regimes and won the governorship. Until 1914, however, whenever Democrats won office they did so with a Yankee candidate. In that important year the first Irish Catholic was elected as Governor of the Commonwealth. He was David I. Walsh, a young lawyer from Clinton whose rural background and moderation gave him considerable Yankee-appeal. Four years later he became Massachusetts' first Democratic senator since the Civil War.

The important victories for the Democratic party began in 1926. David I. Walsh, who had been defeated by a narrow margin in 1924, at the end of his first term in the Senate, built a winning combination two years later in the race to fill Henry Cabot Lodge's Senate seat. He won, beyond the basic Irish support, the vote of the newer immigrant groups which had previously tended to vote Republican, when they voted at all.



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Alfred E. Smith captured the same kind of support in 1928, and he aroused so much interest in the state that the Democratic turnout increased dramatically. The coalition, after some hesitation when it appeared to many of its members that Smith had been given an unfair deal at the national convention, solidified behind Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, and to an even greater extent in 1936.

Massachusetts supported Democratic candidates for the Presidency from 1928 (when Rhode Island was the only other non-Southern state to go Democratic) until 1952. The Democratic party was less successful in operations on the state level, however. It won state-wide office well before it won control of the state legislature, and, of the state-wide offices, it won the governorship before it was able to pick up the lesser constitutional positions. For example, between 1900 and 1931, Democrats held the gubernatorial position for six years, that of Lieutenant-Governor and Secretary for two years, and that of Treasurer, Auditor and Attorney-General for only one year. Gradually, however, the Democrats were able to pick up the reins of government. They gained control of the state House of Representatives in 1949 (losing it again only in the 1953-54 session). In the 1958 election the Democrats won control of the Senate for the first time (though the parties had been tied for control in 1949-50), and they captured a majority of the seats in the state's Congressional delegation.

It is harder in some ways to assess the Democratic than it is the Republican party, for it has matured more recently and, as a result, has been in a position of responsibility less frequently. Its leaders would certainly include Congressman John McCormack, Governors Joseph B. Ely, James M. Curley, Maurice Tobin, Paul A. Dever and Foster Furcolo; and Senators David I. Walsh and John F. Kennedy. (The prominent Republicans listed above were entirely Yankee, while this group is Irish with the exception of Ely, who was a Yankee, and Furcolo, who is of Italian extraction.) Democrats have not been able to develop the career ladder because Republicans have controlled most of the lesser offices for most of the period. Until 1959, no

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Democratic Governor ever had both houses of the state legislature controlled by his party, though this was the common pattern for Republican Governors until very recent years. Thus it is difficult to list official Democratic party accomplishments.

What do these two parties look like today? There is still a great deal of evidence that the state is divided into a Yankee, Protestant, upper social-economic status, rural and suburban Republican party and an Irish, Catholic, lower social-economic status, urban Democratic party.

From the ethnic standpoint, a check of the names of the members of the state House of Representatives shows 60 per cent of the Democrats to have Irish names and 80 per cent of the Republicans to have Yankee names. A glance at the names of the members of the two Massachusetts party committees shows about the same proportion. Before the recent adoption of the pre-primary convention system, the state-wide ticket was straight "green" or straight "blue-blood." For example, the 1950 Republican slate consisted of Coolidge, Curtis, Wood, Burrell, Andrew and Ayer, while the Democratic slate in the same year consisted of Dever, Sullivan, Cronin, Hurley, Buckley and Kelly. In spite of the fact that the pre-primary convention was designed to give greater balance to the ticket, until 1958 the important nominations were reserved largely for Yankee and Irish politicians. A quotation from the 1952 Democratic platform helps bear out the point:

We call for the immediate end of the "Partition of Ireland." The last remnants of former British outrages against a long-suffering people should be removed and withdrawn at once.

We call attention to the fact that the Republican candidate for the Presidency, who has repeatedly expressed his admiration for the unspeakable Cromwell and his sanguinary followers, can scarcely be expected to use his influence, were he elected, to persuade our British allies to remove that tarnish from the shield of their national honor.

The two parties also divide along the religious lines, a division closely related to the ethnic split just mentioned, but not identical with it. I have polled about 300 students, anonymously, in my political parties classes at the University of

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Massachusetts, and I have found only nine Protestant Democrats. There have been more Catholic Republicans, but not many. An interesting analysis of the 1948 Massachusetts election made by Professor John Fenton shows a remarkable correlation between those who voted for Truman, the Democratic Presidential candidate, and those who voted against a referendum legalizing the dissemination of birth control information.

Democrats also tend to have lower social-economic status than Republicans. A valuable study made in 1952 by Professor Duncan Macrae, Jr. showed a clear relationship between the percentage of home-ownership in the various state representative districts and the party of the legislator: the lower the percentage of ownership, the more Democratic the district. It is also still true that the higher the concentration of population in a given voting district, the greater the likelihood that the vote will be Democratic.

The parties differ on a number of issues. Studies of recent party platforms and roll-call votes in the state legislature show some fairly clear divisions on labor and business legislation and on certain appropriations issues. Organized labor is clearly close to the Democratic party. While the Republican program over the years can hardly be characterized as anti-labor, it is closer to industry and finance. Republicans also have a record of somewhat greater concern for civil liberties. All in all, the characterization which Professor Duane Lockard makes in his *New England State Politics* is a useful one. He speaks of Democrats as standing for "liberalism in moderation" and Republicans as standing for "conservatism in moderation." Out-of-state liberals often find it difficult to affiliate with either party when they settle in Massachusetts. They are drawn to the Democrats' economic programs, on the one hand, and to the Republicans' internationalist and civil libertarian outlook on the other.

Yet issues do not seem to divide the parties quite as clearly as do their corporate personalities. Perhaps the best place to sense this is at the biennial state conventions. Republicans treat the occasion with seriousness. They listen to the campaign oratory, make their decisions and go home. They are accustomed

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to following the plans of the inner circle of the party, and Republican voters, in the primary, do not challenge the decisions made at their conventions.

At Democratic conventions, the bands are noisier, the parades are longer, and things are not considered to be running very well unless there are vehement and even bitter intra-party wrangles. It is a harder convention to control. Furthermore, more than half of the convention decisions are challenged at the primaries, often successfully. Former state chairman John Carr likes to tell a story to illustrate the point that his party thrives on strife. "When cats howl in the middle of the night," he says, "they're not fighting, they're making more cats. Well, when we howl, we're making more Democrats."

Yet political parties refuse to stand still. Important changes have taken place recently, both within the traditionally dominant ethnic groups and outside them, to cast some doubt on the continued accuracy of this traditional classification of the two parties in Massachusetts. Again, *The Last Hurrah* may be cited. O'Connor explains Skeffington's defeat at the end of a long political career largely in terms of the assimilation and improved economic well-being of the Irish of the younger generation. Old country ties had less emotional appeal to them and the welfare program of the political boss was not needed—jobs were more plentiful, and welfare had been made a matter of right, not favor, since the days of the New Deal.

The chance for the more capable to get ahead, which had long been open to the Yankees, opened to the Irish! They were going to Harvard, they were entering the professional life of the state and they were taking the "tenement trail" from Charlestown to Cambridge to Concord. They had made their way without the help of the political boss and they tended to mistrust machine politics. They demanded the qualifications of a John F. Kennedy in their leaders, not only those of Kennedy's maternal grandfather, John F. (Honey Fitz) Fitzgerald. In 1959, they turned down the "professional" John F. Powers for a relatively unknown John Collins for mayor of Boston, much as they rejected Frank Skeffington in *The Last Hurrah*.

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(Ambitious young politicians in this state must be asking themselves how they can be professional without appearing so.)

The younger generation of the Irish have not only reacted against the traditional politician. They are also less strongly tied to their traditional political party. There is no evidence that, as they have gone up in the world, they have deserted the state Democratic ticket in great numbers. But they have evidently flocked to the Eisenhower standard. They remain loyal to the image of the Democratic party of Franklin Roosevelt—a party of economic reform. They do not necessarily feel the same loyalty to the Democratic party of Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt—a party which, because of its internationalism and emphasis on civil liberties, is thought by some of them to be soft on communism.

But Massachusetts politics can no longer be described in terms of Yankee Republicans and Irish Democrats. Frank Skeffington is well aware of the importance of the “newer races.” Earlier in this essay I cut short his description of the descent of the Irish upon “the loyal sons and daughters of the first white inhabitants.” This is the continuation of it:

For some time, something new has been on the horizon: namely, the Italians. But when they take over that will be an entirely different story, and I for one won't be around to see it. I don't imagine . . . that it will be too much fun anyway.

Making the same point on another occasion, he lists the necessary foreign policy planks in a Boston municipal election campaign.

One . . . all Ireland must be free. Two . . . Trieste belongs to Italy. They count. At the moment, the first counts more than the second, but that's only because the Italians were a little slow in getting to the boats. They're coming along fast now, though; in twenty years the Irish issue will be about as burning as Unhappy Ethiopia.

Groundwork for this change was laid in 1901 when, for the first time, more Italians than Irish “got to the boats” which landed in Massachusetts. Moreover, in 1906 the number of immigrants from Poland exceeded that of the incoming Irish. French Canadians began settling in the textile cities; Portu-

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guese in the towns and cities of southeastern Massachusetts; and Jews, Armenians, Lithuanians, Greeks and Syrians in the larger industrial cities. Like the Irish on first arriving, these new groups took their positions at the bottom of the social ladder.

Changes brought about by the New Deal and general prosperity, however, have speeded up the process of assimilation of the newer groups, in contrast to the experiences of the Irish. The younger generation of these newer groups started enrolling at Harvard, entering the professions, and taking the "tenement trail" not long after their Irish predecessors. Though they tend to think of the Democratic party of Franklin D. Roosevelt as the party which gave them their start up the economic ladder, they are even less tied to a party today than are the Irish, since they have no strong historic political loyalties.

The two manifestations of political change in the 1958 elections were the final taking over of both elected branches of the state government by the Democrats and the nomination of members of the newer nationalities for top positions on the state ticket. For example, Foster Furcolo is the first person of Italian descent to be elected governor of Massachusetts.

Some observers of that election predict that Massachusetts will become as one-party Democratic as it has been one-party Republican. Certainly the Democrats have an edge in party registration figures. Also, the party is, for the first time, in a position to do some gerrymandering of its own in order to help perpetuate its political power. Yet it is dangerous to write off the Republican party. There is a lively sense of political independence felt by most voters these days—a sense of independence felt particularly strongly by those ethnic groups which have recently reached maturity in this state. The party that can best fulfill their aspirations can hope to control the government of Massachusetts for some years to come, and it is still too early to tell which one it will be. At any rate, we can say that whichever party it is, it will not be a Republican party dominated by the Apleys nor a Democratic party dominated by the Skeffingtons.

## *Fon Roush*

### Two Translations from the Welsh

#### THE RATTLE BAG\*

One time of most leisurely eulogy,  
A summer morn, I trysted under a tree  
Between the mountain and the meadow  
With my maiden of words of melting snow.  
She came to me, I won't contest a thing,  
Promised moon to the promised mooring.  
We sat together, suitable matter,  
Discussing our thoughts on this and that  
(And on my age-old major demand)  
I and this glorious girl reasoned.  
We were sitting so, she stayed shy still,  
Slowly perceiving our love's preamble.  
For a long hour we lay together  
Hiding all harm, winning mead with her,  
When a clamor came (cold food for longing)  
From a stinking-faced foul-crying thing.  
From a bag's bottom a vile boiling we heard,  
Played by a beast disguised as a shepherd.  
He had with him a hatefully gagging  
Juiceless-horned brittle-jawed rattle bag,  
Which this yellow paunched little visitor  
Played on his shabby scabby shank's spur.  
There, before we reached love's hoped-for end,  
The fearful worthy girl was frightened.  
When she, her breast wretchedly wounded,  
Heard the strident winnowed stones, she fled.  
Under Christ it was not a Christian tune  
But a cold name on a white mountain—



A squawking sack at the end of a stick,  
 A bell with a stone and pebble stomach,  
 A bulging chattering English belly  
 Quaking in ox-hide, a crow off-key,  
 A basket bouncing three thousand beetles,  
 Tumultuous black-sack cauldron of spells,  
 Keeper of the field, the straw's foul saint,  
 A black skinned hag, shake-splinter pregnant,  
 Hateful its hack to an old roebuck,  
 Devil bell, in its crotch a stake stuck,  
 Scar-crested stone-carting pebble-bellow  
 Let it make buckles for a scarecrow,  
 And may coldness catch the scattering churl  
 (Amen!) who scared away my girl.

Dafydd ap Gwilym, XIV century

### ODE

My choice a slim and winsome woman,  
 Tall-grown in a heather colored gown.  
 My chosen aim to hear things feminine  
 Phrased after seemly meditation.  
 My chosen sharing is with a girl,  
 With gifts to give and secrets to tell.  
 My choice has waves' lovely coloring,  
 Wisdom and riches and Welsh to sing.  
 My choice is you. How are you choosing,  
 My pretty silence, lovely sulking?  
 My choice is a beauty who won't fight.  
 It's right to choose a girl who chooses right.

Hywel ap Owain Gwynedd, XII century

\* A rattle bag was an animal hide filled with pebbles, which a shepherd would play, by striking it against his leg, to accompany his singing.

## *Leon O. Barron*

### BIG BUSINESS

Relinquishing the lion's chair and voice  
This Head of a Department Now Absorbed  
Remains perplexed.

For time that took him fast  
And smiling through the years allowed no choice  
Forming within his eager grasp of hands  
This living thing.

Now Galatea grown to mortal size  
Has smiles no longer for Pygmalion's eyes.  
She sees in him a former generation,  
Needs no pretense to miss his consternation,  
And rustles off to meet her latest spark.  
Pygmalion gropes in rooms of sudden dark.

So he now frightened hears  
A mingling of well-wishing and farewell,  
And his victorious moment somehow gone.

Congratulating hands thus shake farewell  
In greeting fathers of dynastic bliss  
Who feel, amazed, death's very quiet kiss.

William H. Pritchard

## Diminished Nature

The figure a poem makes. It begins in delight and ends in wisdom. . . . It begins in delight, it inclines to the impulse, it assumes direction with the first line laid down, it runs a course of lucky events, and ends in a clarification of life—not necessarily a great clarification, such as sects and cults are founded on, but in a momentary stay against confusion.

Robert Frost, Preface to *Complete Poems*

### I

NO MATTER how many times we hear this oft-quoted statement of Frost's, the final clause pulls us up short for contemplation. This, we feel, is a distinctive and individual way to talk about what poems do. Instead of assuring us that poetry is, after all, the highest form of knowledge, or a priceless heritage we can ill afford to neglect, or even an unparaphrasable union of form and content, Frost gives us the term "clarification"—and "not necessarily a great clarification" at that. Yet despite his unwillingness to make large claims for what clarification involves, the phrase "momentary stay against confusion" tips us off. Whether we choose to emphasize the poem as "stay" (he speaks elsewhere in the preface of a "line of purpose" struck across "experience"), or to stress its limited momentariness, or to underline the "confusion" against which the poem stands and which it partially orders, we get a sense that Frost thinks of poetry as a precarious game played in the face of peril—"the vast chaos of all I have lived through"—and for that reason a game absolutely necessary to play. In the words of "The Road

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Not Taken" "... that has made all the difference": through poetry we distinguish ourselves from the chaos of experience by striking "a line of purpose across it for somewhere."

Looking at the *Complete Poems*, we are struck, particularly in the lyrics and shorter narratives, by a correspondence between what Frost says a poem should do and the kind of dramatic situations his poems enact. Perhaps this is not surprising; we assume that like most poets Frost did not begin with a definition of poetry but instead wrote poems. When it came time to preface his complete works the definition grew out of a lifetime of verse, and to say that a particular poem conforms to or bears out his large definition of poetry would not be of much critical use. The relationship between individual poems and Frost's definition of poetry is more intimate and complicated than terms like "conforming to" or "bearing out" suggest; it is necessary to make a distinction between the Frost for whom the writing of each poem is a "momentary stay against confusion" and the various speakers of these poems, each of whom faces an analogous threat and attempts to make his own stay.

The relationship becomes even more interesting when, within the poem, not only the speaker but his subject—the person or object contemplated and talked about—is occupied with working out such a stay. In a poem like "An Old Man's Winter Night" we can distinguish three such efforts: the actions and gestures of the aged man who shores up fragments against a threatening environment; the speaker's attempt to comment on these actions in a sympathetic, faithful and unsentimental way—to make a verbal stay that is just adequate; and finally the relationship among environment, old man, and speaker—the stay of form which is the poem itself.

The tenuous adequacy felt in a definition of poetry as "a momentary stay against confusion" is found in the experience dealt with in many of Frost's poems. A large group of them can be classified as poems about deprivation or loss; that is, the experience which is the subject of these poems is characteristically viewed as limited in its range, thoroughly conditioned by

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## *Diminished Nature*

circumstances and somewhat less than fully satisfying in its value to the speaker. The contradiction that appears throughout these poems is of experience as it is imagined, remembered or longed for—full, exhilarating, unbounded—and experience as it is felt—partial, painful, limited. This is certainly not an unusual contradiction for poets to regard—as Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats remind us; but one of Frost's distinctions as a poet is that he takes the contradiction seriously and provides us with some fresh ways of meeting it. A look at three familiar poems which feature some stock objects of nineteenth century English verse—birds, brooks and rural matters in general—will serve to point up Frost's difference from his romantic predecessors. In a preface to his play "A Way Out" Frost asserts that "everything written is as good as it is dramatic"; this assertion can be reconciled with his insistence that the poem "ends in wisdom" by paying particular attention to the quality of wisdom that is achieved.

### II

There is a singer everyone has heard,  
Loud, a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird,  
Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again.  
He says that leaves are old and that for flowers  
Mid-summer is to spring as one to ten.  
He says the early petal-fall is past  
When pear and cherry bloom went down in showers  
On sunny days a moment overcast;  
And comes that other fall we name the fall.  
He says the highway dust is over all.  
The bird would cease and be as other birds  
But that he knows in singing not to sing.  
The question that he frames in all but words  
Is what to make of a diminished thing.

"The Oven Bird" is one of Frost's finest poems, yet the reader who comes upon it for the first time is not struck by any surprisingly dramatic features. All the lines, except for the second, are fairly regular; there are no outstanding changes in tone—even the wry joke about the "fall" has to be delivered with

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about the same inflection as the opening line; nor do the images present any difficulty or demand special attention. Yet the poem is distinguished in its use of language and rightness of tone. By expressing the "diminished thing" in a language which the bird "all but" uses, the poem creates a remarkable decorum, an appropriateness of words to theme that is perhaps its chief pleasure.

This decorum establishes, almost insinuates, itself in the casual assumed manner of its opening assertion: "There is a singer everyone has heard." The bird exists not as a special discovery of the speaker's or as a product of any particular time or place. Unlike the sudden appearance of the darkling thrush in Hardy's poem: "At once a voice arose among/The bleak twigs overhead," the oven bird just "is"; accordingly Frost's speaker has no particular needs, is not engaged in anything, it would seem, except conveying some information about the bird to anyone who will listen. In fact the voice we hear sounds like a good naturalist who does not try to put anything over on the reader but trusts that reportorial accuracy about his specimen will suffice. The repeated "He says" carries on a deadpan recitation of the bird's message and effects a neat balance among considerations of present, past and future scenes: the oven bird details a present nature which is sparsely populated, refers to the lush "early petal fall" he has seen, and predicts the even scantier future in which "the highway dust is over all." We also notice the frequency with which the verb "is" recurs to designate existence, identity and ratio; this frequent use of "is" in preference to active verbs contributes to the insinuated decorum. Nothing actually happens within the poem; rather the static, ordered conditions about which the bird sings are calmly set before us by a speaker whose own saying is as cautious and knowing as the subject of the poem.

This closeness between speaker and bird—the correspondences between a diminished natural scene, a specially appropriate song and the speaker's decorous rendering of both, is Frost's way of inverting the romantic relationship between a poet beset by tribulations and an object (frequently a bird) whose condi-

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tion is seen as admirably opposite to his own. Shelley's skylark is not a bird but a symbol of full spontaneous life: "Hail to thee, blithe Spirit! / Bird thou never wert," and he invokes it in the highest style, unqualified by any doubt or irony: "Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety." The bird has all the qualities of human life without sharing any of its defects and uncertainties. As opposed to this "crystal stream" of song

We look before and after,  
And pine for what is not:  
Our sincerest laughter  
With some pain is fraught;

Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Shelley exults in the disparity between the skylark and humanity, for it allows him at the end of the poem to cry enthusiastically, "Teach me half thy gladness," a plea that he as a special human being—a poet—may be magically singled out and infused with superhuman qualities. The gap between joyous freedom and painful limitation can be closed by the speaker's fervent prayer.

Keeping in mind this brief definition of a romantic convention we can see how Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush" stands half-way between Shelley and Frost in its treatment of this convention. Hardy's landscape bears analogies to the scant mid-summer scene of "The Oven Bird" and his speaker feels perfectly in tune with the deprived circumstances: "The ancient pulse of germ and birth / Was shrunken hard and dry, / And every spirit upon earth / Seemed fervorless as I." At exactly the moment when the "I" makes a connection between his fervorless state and the nature around him, something happens which partially disrupts the correspondence. The aged thrush sings out with full-voiced joy and forces the speaker to reexamine the neat, if joyless, analogy he has made:

So little cause for carolings  
Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
Afar or nigh around,



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That I could think there trembled through  
His happy good-night air  
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew  
And I was unaware.

The state of these "terrestrial things" is similar to the scene in which the oven bird sings, but the thrush produces "ecstatic sounds." The dramatic interest of the poem, then, lies in the way the speaker will take this caroling; since everything on earth is not so fervorless as he himself, his joyless identification with the scene has been disturbed. But while Shelley ends his poem with a rapturous plea to the skylark, Hardy does not attempt to close the gap between himself and the caroling bird. The thrush is, after all, aged and gaunt; his "happy good-night air" may well be his own farewell to terrestrial things, and the language with which the speaker makes his "stay" properly takes this into account in its cautious grammar and moderate tone. The "Hope" which trembles through the bird's song is purposely left vague and unspecified—the capital letter sets it off as a very large abstraction. Whatever the nature of such Hope, the speaker is extremely guarded in his statement of what it can mean to him. "That I could think . . ." certainly presents the minimum argument for belief. The conditional permissive tense takes us one remove from any actual thinking and at least suggests the possibility that the thrush's song may be, at most, a momentarily pleasing self-deception.

There can be no large dramatic moment of recognition in "The Oven Bird" since Frost's speaker does not ask us to be interested in his situation. His minimum claim for the meaning of the bird's song is in accord with the latter's own unextravagant celebration of experience. Nor does the scene itself ask to be celebrated; in fact

The bird would cease and be as other birds  
But that he knows in singing not to sing.  
The question that he frames in all but words  
Is what to make of a diminished thing.

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The preceding lines with their evocations of "fall" and "all" might seem obvious prey for talk about Edenic overtones, yet the very bald and amusing play on "fall" deflates any solemn symbolic interpretation. The speaker explains the bird's persistence in song by means of a paradox that is not easily translatable but whose meaning seems clear. The oven bird is able to persist in song because, in effect, he is not taken in by it. Such singing has to be unillusioned, looking backwards with regret and forward without vain hope. The bird "... knows in singing not to sing": his song is so unlike that of other birds (it is carried on alone and at the wrong time) that it is not song as Shelley's lark was capable of; yet it celebrates nature and experience, however ruefully and guardedly, and it is able to do this by looking on deprivation, imagining still more to come and thus refusing to be overwhelmed. In an earlier poem, "Reluctance," Frost's speaker confronts the dying nature of late fall and asks, "Ah, when to the heart of man/Was it ever less than a treason/To go with the drift of things." The oven bird's "stay," like the heart's question, is a protest against the drift of things; since the bird knows exactly what the fall will be like it uses this knowledge and "frames in all but words" a question that is its own answer. The reader, like the speaker, does not try to answer this question by going beyond the limits it defines. In "Mowing," the whispering of the scythe communicates no secret to the mower but simply expresses the sound of its own activity: "The fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows." So the oven bird's wise persistence in song is the question that he frames—the "what" of the concluding line.

This poem is a good example of how Frost poetically confronts deprivation, the "diminished thing," by insisting upon the fact. Such insistence is perfectly imaged through the bird who makes song out of the very conditions which would seemingly deny that song and make it inappropriate. What I call the decorum of presentation—the way in which the speaker relays the bird's song to us, then accounts for its occurrence without changing his tone or diction—creates something like a "middle style" which we take pleasure in. "The Darkling

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Thrush" carries the romantic situation of fervorless man confronting joyous bird to one sort of culmination. In a joyless universe, a man can still be momentarily surprised by joy, but he can not relate the occurrence to anything in his own experience. Although he may speak of "some blessed Hope," his very way of phrasing places it well outside his consciousness; that the poem ends with "unaware" is not an accident. Frost restylizes the situation by humanizing the bird, giving it that ability to look before and after which Shelley had lamented as the unfortunate burden of mankind. The "diminished thing" can be celebrated by a certain kind of singing; it is this knowledge that the oven bird and the speaker share, and that we experience by reading the poem.

Frost's poetry dramatizes what can be made of diminished things. Consider "Hyla Brook," a related companion piece to "The Oven Bird":

By June our brook's run out of song and speed.  
Sought for much after that, it will be found  
Either to have gone groping underground  
(And taken with it all the Hyla breed  
That shouted in the mist a month ago,  
Like ghost of sleigh-bells in a ghost of snow)—  
Or flourished and come up in jewel weed,  
Weak foliage that is blown upon and bent  
Even against the way its waters went.  
Its bed is left a faded paper sheet  
Of dead leaves stuck together by the heat—  
A brook to none but who remember long.  
This as it will be seen is other far  
Than with brooks taken elsewhere in song.  
We love the things we love for what they are.

We are presented with another stock poetic object which does not behave in the accustomed way. The oven bird cannot "be as other birds" because of the special knowledge it possesses, but Hyla Brook is more pathetically unable to keep up appearances—a diminished thing that can make no claim for itself. It falls to the speaker then to see what can be made of it; he must

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know in singing not to sing or else any claim he makes will be ridiculous and inappropriate.

The opening line strikes a familiar straightforward note. The facts about what happens to "our brook" will be set forth without hesitation, and the studied casualness of "sought for much after that" confirms a disarmingly offhand manner with which the brook's plight is registered. The alternative situations in which the brook may be "found" are equally pathetic: either it has disappeared underground, leaving but a mysterious echo of former sounds, or it has ironically "flourished" by merging with the jewel-weed which only obstructs its flow; thus both "song and speed" are things of the past, available only to those who "remember long." With the melancholy "A brook to none but who remember long" a reader might feel that he has sensed the poem's direction and anticipated the elegiac note on which it will surely end; the line, in its wistfully inverted syntax assures him that he, like the thoughtful speaker, can triumph over the diminished present by invoking remembrance of things past. Thus the remainder of the poem comes as a shock which unsettles expectation:

This as it will be seen is other far  
Than with brooks taken elsewhere in song.  
We love the things we love for what they are.

The slightly annoyed irregularity of the two lines before the last disturbs the even calm of "A brook to none but who remember long" and its apparent satisfactions with the consolations of memory. "This as it will be seen" refers back to the particular Hyla Brook described but also to the speaker's whole manner of celebration—his own way of seeing this unlikely brook. The reference to other brooks is probably Frost's sly distancing of his treatment from Tennyson's babblers—"For men may come and men may go/But I go on for ever." At any rate, the kind of song which this speaker rejects is similar to what the oven bird avoided by knowing in singing not to sing; the fact that Hyla Brook has so clearly "run out of song" determines the way it should be "taken in song" by this particular

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speaker. This way is boldly and clearly set forth in the extra line which caps the sonnet and the regularity of whose ten word measure strikes both eye and ear with its annunciation. The love implied by the oven bird's persistent question—"what to make of a diminished thing"—is directly invoked as this speaker's way of taking the brook; both of them love the things they love "for what they are."

This final line substitutes a loving contemplation of the diminished thing for the earlier appeal to memory: "what they are" takes precedence over past glories of what they have been. Frost's willingness to end this poem and many others with a statement rather than an image seems to some readers a serious failing of his art, a refusal to carry out his own principle that "every poem is as good as it is dramatic." A. Alvarez has complained that in too many poems "There is a refusal to let be, a refusal to allow the reader to do a little of the creative work for himself." He goes on to argue that "Frost's insistence on his meaning is to poetry what the over-use of italics is to prose—more of an irritation than a help."<sup>1</sup> Such insistence on the meaning is annoying because it hands over to the reader the right way to feel about this or that experience; Alvarez makes a legitimate criticism which could be applied to certain of Frost's poems, but it is important to see why it is inapplicable to "Hyla Brook." Our interest in this poem does not consist solely in how we should feel about the faded subject but also in how the speaker will dramatically reveal his way of taking it. And "dramatic" is the right word to describe the movement in the last four lines, emphasizing as it does the distance from where the speaker starts out to where he ends. We do not hear the philosopher dispensing homely wisdom and irritatingly "doing the work for us" but a speaker faced with a particular situation and redefining his manner of taking it. "Hyla Brook" is a representative Frost poem in that it "ends in wisdom," but wisdom is something other than the poet's doling out of an unassailable truth, for it invokes a sense of what has been re-

<sup>1</sup> *The Shaping Spirit: Studies in Modern English and American Poets* (London, 1958), 170.

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jected by the final determined statement. The wisdom of this poem is inseparable from the way Frost's speaker works out his momentary stay not by assertion but through drama.

With these two short lyrics in mind we can see how a slightly longer poem, "The Need of Being Versed in Country Things," extends our sense of how Frost varies and complicates his treatment of deprived experience—the diminished thing:

The house had gone to bring again  
To the midnight sky a sunset glow.  
Now the chimney was all of the house that stood,  
Like a pistil after the petals go.

The barn opposed across the way,  
That would have joined the house in flame  
Had it been the will of the wind, was left  
To bear forsaken the place's name.

No more it opened with all one end  
For teams that came by the stony road  
To drum on the floor with scurrying hoofs  
And brush the mow with the summer load.

The birds that came to it through the air  
At broken windows flew out and in,  
Their murmur more like the sigh we sigh  
From too much dwelling on what has been.

Yet for them the lilac renewed its leaf,  
And the aged elm, though touched with fire;  
And the dry pump flung up an awkward arm;  
And the fence post carried a strand of wire.

For them there was really nothing sad.  
But though they rejoiced in the nest they kept,  
One had to be versed in country things  
Not to believe the phoebes wept.

Each of the first four stanzas describes either a frustrated or a successful meeting between country things, and through images of desolation expresses what is entailed in such a meeting. The speaker animates his objects by using active verbs

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and by allowing them the illusion of choice: "the house had gone to bring again," and "the barn.../...would have joined." Paraphrased in terms of "meetings" the argument runs something like this: the burning house fuses with the sky in that "sunset glow" which makes it no longer a house but a forsaken pistil; the barn unsuccessfully attempts to meet the house in its destruction and is left as a barren reminder of the place—it can no longer meet the teams which carry hay to it, and it meets the birds only through the defective broken windows that are left. The birds' "murmur" is taken to be their sad comment on the desolate scene, and by the end of stanza four we have moved into the realm of human grief; the sound of the birds' flight is like our sighs over things departed. Although this simile is introduced quietly enough it is important to the meaning of the poem. Frost is concerned with exploring the implications of meeting through simile; the murmur of birds and human sighing come together through the pleasant ambiguity of "dwelling" as the birds literally enact what the mind is engaged in. And the sound of "Their murmur more like the sigh we sigh" in its alliteration, assonance and repetition contributes nicely to the melancholy identification in grief which the speaker momentarily asks us to accept.

That the identification is a momentary one, though, is immediately apparent by the fifth stanza as the phrase "Yet for them..." introduces a distinction between the birds and ourselves which the remainder of the poem fills out. It becomes evident that Frost is playing a double game here. He draws on the pastoral situation which is typically concerned with the occurrence of certain meetings in nature: the shepherd's lament is expressed through the sympathetic participation of the objects around him. So, in this poem, the objects actively engage in their various renewals and the narrator continues to endow these actions with willful purpose; they are performed for the sake of the phoebes. Yet at the same time Frost is engaged, delicately and tenderly to be sure, in a criticism of the pastoral mode, more specifically the process of sympathetic identification between man and nature that Ruskin termed the "pathetic



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fallacy." This fallacy is committed grammatically at the end of the fourth stanza by the deliberately loose identification of human beings and phoebes: "Their murmur more like the sigh we sigh." The word "more" here does not refer precisely to anything but aptly conveys the temptation to see one's feelings expressed by the surrounding natural objects.

But as the speaker observes (in stanza five) various remarkable ways in which nature renews itself he is made conscious of the large difference between himself and the phoebes which his earlier simile did not express. The adaptation that a ruined nature can make is cause for surprise if not admiration, but it can adapt insofar as it is not human, insofar as it does not and cannot show ". . . too much dwelling on what has been." When the speaker at the end of "Hyla Brook" salutes the things for what they are, he is refusing to dwell on the brook as it once was by accepting the present diminished thing. In this poem the catalogue of natural renewals forces the speaker to admit that "For them there was really nothing sad"; it is this knowledge that contends with the attractive temptation to read human regrets into the non-human. Indeed the poem is about more than one "need," and both of these tendencies are admirably expressed in the last stanza:

For them there was really nothing sad.  
But though they rejoiced in the nest they kept,  
One had to be versed in country things  
Not to believe the phoebes wept.

Here we have a fine example of the way the tone of a passage can work against its prose sense, or at least communicate to a reader everything that a simple paraphrase leaves out. "Really" is not a word to which Frost as poet is addicted, and his use of it in this passage is deliberately rhetorical, conveying as it does the reluctance with which this truth about the phoebes is admitted. We ordinarily use the word in a strongly emotive sense to invoke the case which is true, no matter how strongly the immediate situation might seem to contradict it—"but really, you know, there's nothing there at all." As Frost uses it,

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"really" carries a rather wistful distant quality of admission which is promptly qualified by the following "But though. . ." The truth of "rejoiced" is clear and undeniable as a statement about the phoebes' situation; at the same time the tone and grammar make a maximum case for the pathetic fallacy that is rejected. "One had" suggests both the difficulty and tentativeness of being so "versed," and the poem ends with "wept" although we know that this is contrary to fact.

The poem is a tender criticism of pastoral because it puts before us a living sense of what the much maligned pathetic fallacy can mean (in both its terms) and it does this with sureness and economy. Being versed in country things is like knowing in singing not to sing and loving things for what they are; the "wisdom" of "The Need . . ." is a sad wisdom which only just succeeds in displacing the loving untruth that opposes it. Yvor Winters's argument that Frost "believes that impulse is trustworthy and reason contemptible"<sup>2</sup> makes little sense in the light of this poem, which places so carefully the claims of impulse and knowledge.

### III

These three poems define a central attitude toward experience which we encounter in Frost's poetry, an attitude that can be found in a poem as early as "Reluctance" and which reaches full articulation in later ones like "The Most of It" and "Directive." I am not bent on classifying or reducing the pleasure and variety we receive from the poetry under the heading of any single large attitude; but one poem does imply another, and schematism is helpful as long as we remain conscious of our schemes. The attitude is elusive, but Randall Jarrell has given it a fine statement in his essay "The Other Frost":

. . . many of these poems are extraordinarily subtle and strange, poems which express an attitude that, at its most extreme, makes pessimism seem a hopeful evasion; they begin with a flat and terrible reproduction of the evil in the world and end by saying: It's so, and there's nothing you can do about it; and if there were, would *you* ever do it? The limits

<sup>2</sup> *The Function of Criticism: Problems and Exercises* (Denver, 1957), 179.

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which existence approaches and falls back from have seldom been stated with such bare composure.<sup>3</sup>

"Flat and terrible reproduction of . . . evil" is not the right label for poems as discreet and artful as the ones we have examined, but the first and last parts of Jarrell's remarks are relevant, for it is precisely by the stating and acceptance of limits that Frost shows pessimism to be an evasion. Time and again in his poetry an experience which might have culminated in lamentation or prayer is turned instead into an occasion for knowledge. Once the speaker is made aware of the distinction between himself and, say, the phoebes, or between his idea of what a brook should be and what one is actually like, or between the song of other birds and the particular sound of the oven bird, then he is no longer in danger of being overwhelmed by confusion.

In a late poem called "One Step Backward Taken" the speaker feels his position threatened by an encroaching landslide:

But with one step backward taken  
I saved myself from going.  
A world torn loose went by me.  
Then the rain stopped and the blowing  
And the sun came out to dry me.

This concern is given its fullest, most moving treatment in "Directive," a poem from Frost's last published volume, *Steeple Bush* (1947). Here the backward step is an immense one, taken through nature and history into a new world—"Back out of all this now too much for us." The reader becomes an imagined traveler, directed through a series of monuments—geologic, historical, domestic—until he reaches the ultimate goal of the journey, a brook which the guide presents in this manner:

I have kept hidden in the instep arch  
Of an old cedar at the waterside  
A broken drinking goblet like the Grail  
Under a spell so the wrong ones can't find it,

<sup>3</sup> *Poetry and the Age* (New York, 1955), 27-28.

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So can't get saved, as Saint Mark says they mustn't.  
(I stole the goblet from the children's playhouse.)  
Here are your waters and your watering place.  
Drink and be whole again beyond confusion.

In these final lines of the poem what had been referred to earlier as "Your destination and your destiny" come together as the guide reveals himself to be a wizard who makes use of magic places and spells to guarantee the effectiveness of his cure. By moving back to the source and drinking the waters out of a goblet like the Grail, the traveler will be transformed, miraculously "whole again beyond confusion." Salvation from the "now too much for us" is achieved by a private act in which the "momentary stay against confusion" seems to be transformed into a permanent condition "beyond confusion" as the Christian sacramental character of the act would transcend nature and time.

But while this ritual is being performed the language undercuts it and makes it into something else than a Christian salvation. Looking at the kind of refreshment the guide holds up, we see that the goblet is a broken one, stolen from the children's playhouse; and we are forced to reconsider this salvation in the light of the strange circumstances under which it is offered. For the traveler-reader has been taken so far out of "this now too much for us," so far "beyond confusion" that in a rather frightening sense anything goes. Is there any distinction, Frost seems to be asking, between a solemn act of faith and the wildest scheme of make-believe? He imagines a state beyond the confusion of history and personality as well, yet we are permitted to experience this state only through the accents of a voice that is priest, magician, rural humorist, child and spellbinder all at the same time. In other words, salvation, as it is put forth by the guide, is inseparable from a very elaborate and peculiar tone of voice, establishing itself in every line and forcing the reader continually to adjust his sense of the way something is being said.

The difficulty presented by the end of "Directive" is mainly a matter of deciding how to "take" the goblet, the salvation

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which is offered to us. We can usefully distinguish Frost's expression of salvation from that of Eliot, in the conclusion to "Little Gidding":

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
Through the unknown, remembered gate  
When the last of earth left to discover  
Is that which was the beginning;  
At the source of the longest river  
The voice of the hidden waterfall  
And the children in the apple-tree  
Not known, because not looked for  
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness  
Between two waves of the sea.  
Quick now, here, now, always—  
A condition of complete simplicity  
(Costing not less than everything) . . .

Many of the props in this first world are similar to those of "Directive," and the voice in "Little Gidding" tells us that we shall arrive where we started, back to a condition of complete simplicity which costs everything and which is absolutely worth it. An unchanging voice steadily delineates the qualities of the state of the soul ready for salvation; the voice imagines for us what redemption will be like, and is thoroughly and straightforwardly expressive of where one must be to achieve it. Hugh Kenner remarks that "The end of 'Little Gidding' fends off nothing"<sup>4</sup> and it is precisely this complete openness to the transforming experience that Eliot's tone conveys.

In "Directive" the guide's relationship to the waters he offers is a trickier matter. Do we end up with salvation or make-believe? Are we invited to recreate ourselves or to annihilate ourselves? These questions are ways of asking the larger question of whether we are to take "Directive" as a religious preparation for transformation or a heartbreaking joke on the very

<sup>4</sup> *The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot* (New York, 1959), 323.

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solace it puts forth. Surely it is tone that makes all the difference. Putting the voice of "Directive" next to the one we have at the end of "Little Gidding," we can see that there is nothing in or out of the world that can reduce Frost to a monotone, since he is never wholly caught up and taken in by his own offer. In one last great poetic effort he sets out to imagine an undiminished nature so perfectly appropriate to the mind that there is, seemingly, no difference between desire and fulfillment. Yet, there persists a play of voice which fends off everything by insisting that there is *all* the difference between the mind and what is outside it, and that this very difference makes the use of imagination possible and necessary. In the earlier poems considered, the "one step backward taken" is a modest but significant step back from the danger of confusion to the relative safety of knowledge—to that clarification of life which Frost defines as the end of poems. "Directive," like the earlier poems, "ends in wisdom" by suggesting that there is a time, perhaps, when the backward step is necessary to save us from salvation itself.





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ERNST BARLACH



TWO ACTS FROM  
*THE FLOOD*

A LETTER ON KANDINSKY

EIGHT SCULPTURES

BRECHT

*NOTES ON THE  
BARLACH EXHIBITION*

NORTHAMPTON

MCMLX

ERNST BARLACH, renowned German sculptor, graphic artist, and writer, was born in 1870. Over the years he wrote eight dramas, two unfinished novels, an autobiography, a variety of short prose pieces, and a great number of letters astonishing in their literary power. He died in 1938, defamed by Hitler Germany for his "un-German" art. His utterances against the Nazi state played a role, as did Hitler's personal antipathy to his sculpture. Commissions were cancelled, exhibits called off, books banned. Despite pressure to leave Germany, the sick old man remained and worked. Before he died, all his major public memorials had been removed or destroyed.

DIE SÜNDFLUT (THE FLOOD), Barlach's fifth drama, received the Kleist Prize in 1924 as the best play of the year. In a note to a cousin Barlach explained why the stage production disappointed him. He wrote: "Noah looks more like King Lear, Calan would make a more likely Japheth, the Beggar (God in disguise) is clearly a victim of the trembling palsy handed down from bygone millenia. I feel ill . . . and wonder to what avail I sketched the whole crew. Noah I had thought of as a landed proprietor grown a trifle soft and slack, and with a scarcely perceptible potbelly. He walked with a cane and had his little human frailties — was a bit patronizing for all his goodwill toward his fellow men. . . . The play [had] the darkness of the grave, the atmosphere of the tomb, and [was] so boring you could vomit. I still think *The Flood* could even be extremely funny in certain places. But how out of place humor is in the grave!" Critics, he hinted to his brother, had not recognized "that physical and external destruction can be an inner victory." The world of the play is that of the Biblical account. Men have turned away from God; Noah alone seems obedient to His will. God commands Noah to build the ark. The animals assemble. When the deluge comes, only Noah and his family are saved. From the familiar ground of the traditional story — to which Barlach added an invented Antagonist — the play moves in an unorthodox way to its culmination in a triumphant paradox. DANIEL C. O'NEIL.

# THE FLOOD *Acts II & V*

Translated by Anne Halley and Alex Page

## ACT II

### 1. DESERT

THE HUNCHBACKED LEPER. Are you still with us, dear hump, and our beloved leprosy too? Come on, come on, before somebody hits us.

*Sneaks away. A Beggar on crutches goes by with dragging steps. Two Angels meet him, stand at right and left.*

FIRST ANGEL. We know you in all your shapes.

SECOND ANGEL. We find you everywhere.

FIRST ANGEL. Wherever you stay.

SECOND ANGEL. In the likeness of your image . . .

FIRST ANGEL. Of man, whom you love more than all of us, who were born of light and strength and fire.

SECOND ANGEL. Of the earth-clod, whose misery you have flung around your shoulders.

BEGGAR. Your talk is obscure. You veil your will in words.

FIRST ANGEL. We will as you will.

SECOND ANGEL. And cannot want, except as you will. But they can want otherwise.

FIRST ANGEL. Men can want otherwise.

*Beggar gestures humbly.*

FIRST ANGEL. Earth is bad material for your work — there is wolfseed in her. Earth permeates man with her being, nourishes him with wolf's milk.

SECOND ANGEL. What the children suck from the mothers starts from their eyes like fiery wrath.

FIRST ANGEL. They are tangled together in packs, they run wild through the world like beasts.

SECOND ANGEL. Fathers beget their wives, mothers bear their husbands.

FIRST ANGEL. They build houses for animals and clay images. They give their own gruesome gods your majesty and grandeur.

SECOND ANGEL. Your image is an abomination.

FIRST ANGEL. Your world has fallen into madness.

BEGGAR, *shaking his head*. And what about Noah?

FIRST ANGEL. Your child and servant Noah?

SECOND ANGEL. Noah is the only one among them all.

BEGGAR. I want to see him. Go and announce me.

*Angels silent; the Beggar makes a pleading motion.*

FIRST ANGEL. You, highness and holiness?

SECOND ANGEL. You, majesty and mercy?

FIRST ANGEL. You the storm, you the silence?

SECOND ANGEL. You, all seeming and all being?

BEGGAR. Tell him he shall see me with his eyes, touch me with his hands. No more, nothing about my appearance, nothing about my dress. Go.

*Angels go off. He limps on, talking to himself pitifully.*

I'm sorry, I'm sorry I did it. They shall rot. I will root them out and drown them, sink them — forget them, forget, forget! Spawned from a false seed, they are not my children, not mine. They were breathed out in overflowing love, but born shameless and hateful. Bastards, bastards, bastards!

*He threatens into the distance with his crutch.*

## 2. NEAR NOAH'S TENTS. *The Leper flits past. Japheth and Shem.*

JAPHETH. Strange, how different she is from all the others. A nearly dumb woman, she's your humble servant in love-making, but high and mighty in a way that makes you think she washes herself all the time just because you've touched her. It's no comfort being with her, I'd much rather have that fat Zebid for my wife.

SHEM. I'd try it with her though, in any case, Japheth.

JAPHETH. What, with your left-handed messing around? Ha — I know how to handle her better than that! That's a laugh — Shem.

SHEM. It just slipped out like that. I'm as serious about Awah as you are about Zebid.

JAPHETH. That's pretty interesting seriousness, at least in words and thoughts!

SHEM. And that's how I mean it — but for Ham it's different, for him it's more than words and thoughts. How often he takes her in to his wife, where she's nursing her little doll, as if the world needed her example. And in between laughing and rejoicing all kinds of unintentional things happen — you get absent-minded and easily put things that belong in someone else's pocket into your own. I know all about that.

JAPHETH. You know about that?

SHEM. I'm no worse than the rest of you clowns — I just don't fool myself. And Father Noah himself, by day no energy and at night no rest — always staring straight ahead: he sees her even with his eyes closed.

JAPHETH. The old ones are the worst. I've known that a long time.

SHEM. Just worships her! No matter how he scratches, he's still got the itch. Doesn't he look pretty pleased when she laughs at the way he runs on about God? Then she looks up and around, and feels behind the walls to see if he's standing there. She thinks God is his father or cousin or fourth son, hiding in a corner somewhere, but maybe he'll yawn or sneeze sometime. That there may be something not quite right about his looks, that he's lost his shape. God haunts her soul, it's no more than that, but still he's in it, in her and with her — it's something she has, and holds onto. Come on, we have to dig holes and set traps before the wolves and wild children outnumber us.

*Both off. Ahire enters.*

AHIRE. They all talk only about Awah, and the things I don't hear, I see. All these new expressions and looks, this unfamiliar stopping and going and turning around, waiting and waving — Awah — nothing but Awah!

*Awah enters, carrying a lamb in her arms.*

AHIRE. Are you coming from the pasture outside, Awah?

AWAH, *nodding*. Father gave it to me. I'm just afraid God will eat it. I'm going to take it to bed with me, if he comes I'll scratch.

AHIRE. And what will Japheth say to that, when both young and old sheep always have lice?

*Awah puts the lamb down, begins to undress and shake her clothes out.*

AHIRE. But look, Awah, Shem is still standing behind those trees — and how you've uncovered yourself! You should be more afraid of Shem's looks than of lice, Awah — run into the tent, finish your business behind skins and blankets.

*Shakes finger at Shem.*

*Noah, with gestures of humility, leads in the two Angels.*

NOAH. Rest under my roof, delight my soul with your stay. No other place would serve you with its life and its all, as this one will, between my tents and near this grove. It all comes from God, it is all yours. Ahire, don't stand there, get moving, pour water into your best dishes. I'll help you carry if none of the children come. Awah — oh Awah.

AWAH. Who are they, Father?

NOAH. God's messengers, Awah, messengers with God's words on their tongues. *(He embraces Awah impulsively.)* Child, oh Awah, please be glad. Ahire, what are you waiting for, we have to butcher — let's get busy — but quietly, children, move quietly, honor our guests with actions as soundless as silent prayer.

*Ahire creeps away, frightened. The Angels smile, Awah claps her hands in delight, Shem watches fearfully from the distance.*

FIRST ANGEL. We will rest and wash the dust from our feet.

SECOND ANGEL. Make whatever arrangements you wish for us.

NOAH. The lamb I gave to Awah — Shem, come quickly, kill the lamb and give it to your mother to roast.

*Shem realizes he is discovered and fearfully withdraws further. In the background Ahire motions to Awah. Awah goes out, returns carrying a heavy jug of water.*

NOAH. Ahire, Shem, what are you waiting for, what are you afraid of? They're afraid, Awah — how can they be afraid?

*Awah kneels to wash the Angels' feet. Noah carries the lamb off. The Angels smile and Awah smiles back. She dries their feet with her hair, caresses their knees and thighs.*

AWAH. Tell me where I can find God.

FIRST ANGEL. He will come and you shall see him.

SECOND ANGEL. You, who do not know him, shall see him.

AWAH. See him and not know — no, if he is as beautiful as you I will recognize him.



FIRST ANGEL. I will kiss your eyes and you will recognize him.  
(*Does so.*)

SECOND ANGEL. I will touch your ears and you will feel his voice. (*Does so.*)

AWAH. Will he come soon?

FIRST ANGEL. He is near.

SECOND ANGEL. He will eat of your lamb.

FIRST ANGEL, *rising*. The day carries us away.

SECOND ANGEL, *rising*. Time pulls at our feet.

FIRST ANGEL. Tell Noah he will see him.

SECOND ANGEL. Promise him, he will touch him.

*They go. Awah throws herself to the ground crying. Noah enters.*

NOAH. They wouldn't let me go — (*upset*) — Are you alone, Awah? Where — where — angels of the Lord, God's messengers, holy ground where your feet walked! (*Stumbles, falls down beside Awah, kisses her hands.*) Your hands touched them, your soul weeps for them — give me some of your weeping, give me of your pain — share with me, Awah.

AWAH. He is coming, they announced that he is near. You shall touch him and you shall see him. You shall see God. He is coming, God is coming.

NOAH. To see — to see God? With my own eyes? (*terrified*) He who gave me sight to judge cows and calves would cast the power of his eternal light on my eyes? Two mouseholes to harbor the image of the highest on high? They will crack open, burn up, they will be blinded. (*Stands up.*) Ahire is right Shem is right — it was an apparition, a mockery, it was illusion and lies. Get up, Awah, get out of my sight, hide in the dark of your house, go on crying in the corner — but watch out, my grief may break out in anger. Up — out. Bah, bah, nothing but idol-worship and madness. (*He pushes her away and crouches down, sullen and despairing, in the shady corner under the canopy.*)

JAPHETH, *running*. Something flew past me like hot wind — as if clothed in a liquid web of sunbeams — two talking giants with rushing and panting and swarming and slipping of wings of air on their heels — over me, passing through me, they ground me between their words like millstones — Father,

father, how frightened I was.

NOAH. You too. All of you were afraid. You are joyless, without freedom, without peace — only Awah and I are different — oh God, oh God, give me back my joy — intelligence is fear, caution is fear.

*Ahire and Shem come back.*

NOAH. Talk together, but I will be deaf. I will not and cannot hear, covered by grief and buried in bitterness. (*They surround him and all look at him.*) Oh fool, fool, fool, to let myself be stupefied by your prudence, oh the torture of lost bliss. (*enraged*) Go somewhere — don't stand and look at me — I let myself get confused by your windy words, held back by your resinous hands, while joy, peace and freedom departed. Suffering, dear suffering, is all I have left — leave me my suffering, leave me that little bit of lost pleasure. Go — all of you, go!

*Ahire looks at him fearfully, Shem shrugs his shoulders, Japheth turns and goes. Ahire and Shem follow. Noah plucks a bunch of grass and chews on it. Calan saunters in.*

CALAN, *listening*. You can hear it all the way up here: the cattle are bellowing for water.

*Noah ignores him.*

CALAN. Yes, Noah, it's settled. A lot of cattle are going to die.

*Noah chews.*

CALAN, *sitting down with him*. Pray for rain, but for a lot of rain, more than a handful. How do you do it anyway? I've already tried it, but it didn't work. I'd like to learn the trick — if it helps, prayer is a fine thing.

NOAH. Your prayer has nothing in common with mine.

CALAN. I think it does. Noah, let's organize a sacrifice together. Everything is ready, the sacrifice and the suppliants. You make the sacrifice and I'll watch and learn from you. Just lately I got my hands on a young, handsome, spotlessly healthy, curlyhaired shepherd from across the ravine, and my man, Chus, is bringing him now. He's made to be sacrificed — a showpiece of a sacrifice. Look, that's why I came — your putting Awah to bed with your sweaty-skinned Japheth won't offend me. Her first son's mine, anyway, and once he's born I don't care what happens.

NOAH, *staring straight ahead* — as if dressed in a liquid web of sunbeams, that's how they go by —

CALAN. What are you whimpering about?

NOAH. Joy, peace and freedom pass over and through him —

CALAN. Noah!

NOAH. He was ground by their words as if between millstones! (*defensively*) Calan, Calan, what do I care whether Awah's first son is Japheth's or yours — two speaking giants like hot wind! Why don't you listen, two talking giants and panting and rushing and slipping of wings — (*He sobs.*)

*Chus comes with the young Shepherd.*

CALAN. The sacrifice, Noah, wake up!

NOAH. God takes no pleasure in human sacrifice. It is an abomination to him.

CALAN. My dear Noah, God will take what we offer him. He doesn't sniff at the meat, but judges according to the giver's heart. If you give gladly, he'll take gladly.

NOAH. He alone is master of this man's death or life, Calan.

CALAN. Not he, but I. And I make you the judge.

NOAH. Take him back. A man is not a thing, like an animal.

CALAN. But you did take Awah and offer her up to Japheth. Evasions, Noah, — we must have a sacrifice!

NOAH. I will not cut into a man's flesh. I will not butcher God's child. I shed no blood. God will not let himself be mocked. Thou shalt not kill.

CALAN. If you could sacrifice Awah to Japheth, God will allow my sacrifice, too. I am set on trying your God, Noah. I have friendly intentions toward him and he will recognize my good faith.

NOAH. I don't want to be your accomplice, Calan.

CALAN. But God let him fall into my hands. God sent the drought and makes the country poor. Apparently he needs a sacrifice, Noah — and just look at him, isn't this a gift worthy of God?

NOAH, *to Shepherd*. Don't be afraid. Your life is in God's hands.

CALAN. Have you decided what to do about my proposal? Shall I stand next to God before you? I am strong and power-

ful and gracious. If he is master of life and death, I am not behind him in that.

NOAH. Calan, your power is great, but God's is greater. You are a man, and he does not want idolatry. Take pity on me and don't torture me with such desires. You are going to be poor too, Calan, poor because of the drought and according to God's will.

CALAN, *grinning*. Oh no, Noah, that's not how the land lies. Whatever God takes from me in the drought, I will grant myself again, from the full treasuries of distant lands. And to you too, Noah, to you also — don't be afraid of God and his drought. God's drought is my servant and helper, and yours too, Noah, yours as well.

NOAH. I serve him the same in drought.

CALAN. I'll have to show you that I am as mighty as God. (*To Chus:*) Take him behind the trees of the grove and cut off both his hands, then bring both hands back here. (*To Noah:*) If he lets it happen, I will take it as a sign that the sacrifice pleases him, or else that his wrath is powerless against even my tiny godhead. In that case he would be smaller than I — I would not even call him master of this drought. (*Chus off with Shepherd.*) We'll see, Noah, we'll see — He or I, God or Calan.

*Noah wrings his hands.*

CALAN. Are you afraid his power won't hold out? My word can cut off hands — hear whether his word saves them. (*Screams are heard.*) What do you say, Noah — who is master, if not Calan?

NOAH. Say another word, Calan. (*Screams continue.*) Kill him outright and stop the screams reverberating in my bowels. Speak, Calan, speak.

CALAN. What, just to soothe your insides? Ask the other one that, Noah. The sacrifice is done. Let him get his fill of screaming, because there are many who cry out and their cries are not drowned in his mercy. Let him trouble to say the word, if he likes quiet. I gave the offering. Now it belongs to him, let him do as he pleases. (*Chus enters, carrying two bloody hands.*) That's fine, Chus, you can nail them to the post here. Let him see that Calan does not take back a gift.

*Chus does as he is told.*

CALAN, *to Noah, who covers his ears.* Take your hands away, hear what your God grants you to hear. Anyway, if he lets him scream he must enjoy the noise, it must tickle his bowels. Or could it be that even if he wanted quiet, his word would be powerless?

NOAH. I spit on you, Calan, I spit on you. (*Spits.*)

CALAN. On me, Noah? That comes as a great surprise — on me?

NOAH. On your act, Calan, on your abominable action. (*Spits.*) Butcher — murderer — blasphemer!

CALAN. I am more and more surprised, Noah.

NOAH. Shame on you, monster, raving tempter of God's wrath!

CALAN. Why Noah, it's you who are raving. I don't begrudge God more beauty than mine, but are his actions really less shameful than mine — that is, if what happened really was shameful — if it was, Noah, if it was? If it was shameful, then it was shameful to watch, to allow, and to listen, the way this pretty God and this pious Noah did—shameful, shameful.

NOAH. Do you think that I, a peaceful old man who puts his great trust in God, should stay your hand?

CALAN. Maybe you think not? When you put your trust in God, maybe God put his trust in Noah. And in the midst of so much trust and confidence, I became a butcher and blasphemer. Will you promise me to spit on God if it turns out that he let the sacrifice take place, although he despised it? That would make me a murderer only because of my longing for God's heart and because of God's omission. Look here, Noah, that makes God the murderer of my innocence — don't you see that?

NOAH. Poor, horrible Calan, where can we find peace and joy and freedom for you?

CALAN. Don't worry about that — I'm not a man of your kind. I am the child of a greater God than yours, a child of God, Noah, a child dethroned, lost, stolen, abused and neglected, but a God! Who was that looking around the corner?

NOAH. Around the corner? I saw nothing.

CALAN. I did. Look, here it comes skipping across the path again — a pretty bowlegged gnome, a queer little old man —

take the sack from that post, Chus, run after him and catch him. (*Chus hesitates, confused, but then understands Calan's stern look and a secret signal and goes.*) Really, I think you're ashamed of him — but it was certainly he, Noah. Be a man, Noah, and admit it — it was he, God himself jumped across the path.

NOAH. He? A little old man, a gnome — enough blasphemy, Calan, I am ashamed for you.

*Chus returns, brings the sack, but is still uncertain whether he has understood Calan's whim correctly.*

CALAN. Well done, Chus, tie him up and let's have it. There! I know it must be he — he couldn't look any different — and I can certainly understand why you'd want to lie to get a God like this off your neck. If it's all right with you, I'll take him along and have some fun with him — maybe he's smart enough to train. (*Shakes the sack.*) What a catch, Noah's God in a straw sack! But let me tell you, if he bites I'll beat him. Now I'm sorry I cut that poor fellow's hands off for nothing — he's much too good for a God like this.

NOAH. You blaspheme on and on, Calan. (*Buries his face in his hands.*)

*The old Beggar on crutches appears and stands beseechingly in front of him. Noah looks up.*

BEGGAR. The wolfchildren attacked me. I am torn, ragged and bleeding. Take pity on me. (*Shows his wounds.*)

CALAN. They did right to rough you up a little. Better for you to be food, than to eat it.

*Noah stands up slowly, approaches, visibly shaken.*

BEGGAR, *awkward and trustful.* Look, a stone hit my chin, and I have scratchmarks all over — beatings, so many beatings. I'm hungry too. (*He looks at Noah, smiles.*)

NOAH. Beatings? And you're hungry too?

BEGGAR. I'm so thin and old, I'm helpless and don't need much. (*smiles*) And still I have to go hungry.

NOAH. And you come to me for food.

BEGGAR, *quietly.* Yes, to you Noah, to you.

NOAH, *shyly.* Oh the time — what a lot of time has passed since then —

*They look at each other, trying harder and harder to recognize each other.*

NOAH. Won't you come closer?

BEGGAR. And you really won't drive me from your door, won't set your dogs on me — I am very lonely in the world, and I only dared come from so far because I thought you would take me in. I had a lot of trouble on the way. And still — you look so different.

NOAH. Oh Father — from what far distance have you come to me?

BEGGAR. I can't stay long, either. I just wanted to see you and be refreshed.

NOAH. So you're still in this life, after all, poor old Father. But why must you drag yourself so heavily through the world?

BEGGAR. The time past has forgotten me, Noah, and I have lost touch with it, I am confused and have lost my way. But now I am with you, my son, Noah.

NOAH, *falls at his feet, embraces his knees, stands up again and looks at him doubtfully.* Is it you, Father?

BEGGAR. Yes, Noah, it is. Have you forgotten me?

NOAH, *shaking head.* I'm mixed up, but still, you have been my Father. Father, the children are men and we are people of substance — and you, a stranger far away?

BEGGAR. Yes, we've moved far apart from each other — my concerns aren't yours anymore — and yet, Noah, and yet you were once my son.

NOAH. Come to the house and take what I can offer you.

*He draws the Beggar closer, motions him to sit.*

BEGGAR, *pointing to nailed-up hands.* Yes, times have changed. In my day they didn't cut men's hands off.

CALAN. In our day, you old fraud, you alms-eater, fathers don't reproach their sons, but the sons their fathers. But I cut off the hands and had them nailed up — I, Calan, child of the God who gives me strength not to be a slave. (*He shakes the sack.*) Neither Noah nor his God could stop me.

BEGGAR. Perhaps God will requite you in your children.

CALAN. My God won't revenge himself on my children — that's typical of Noah's God. And I stuck Noah's God in this sack, just in case, to keep him from taking liberties with me.



Get yourself washed, get the dust and blood washed off.

*Noah bathes the feet, washes the face, arms, and hands of the Beggar.*

CALAN. Do you know that water is expensive, you mudbird? Those two bloody hands pray for the return of every drop wasted on you, and if your ears weren't too lazy, you'd hear the man whose dumb hands pray for drops, groaning and yelling for water. (*Screaming is heard.*) Do you hear? He's praying for us, we assigned him his place. That's how they pray in our day.

BEGGAR. Out of the wells of the deep an ocean shall rise for every drop of blood. From the gates of heaven a flood shall pour down for each fearful breath this lamenting man draws.

CALAN. Oho — what an overdose of fulfillment!

BEGGAR. You would do well to drown out the man's sighs in mercy, because the stomachs of heaven shall vomit in answer to them.

CALAN. What are you whining about drowning? How did my word get in your mouth?

BEGGAR. My ears are not as lazy as you thought.

*Enter Ham, annoyed.*

HAM. The river's drying up, the animals are dying, and the wild wolf-toothed children drink their blood. Every day the herds get smaller, Father.

NOAH. That's Ham, our second one — look Ham, don't be startled — this old man once rocked you on his knee — can you still recognize him? You ought to recognize him.

HAM. I've got more important things to think about — what about that bloody man in the woods, who cut him up so shamefully?

NOAH, *to Beggar*. He's got children already, Father — that's how everything changes and is marked by time. You shall see them.

BEGGAR. Did they turn out well — and your sons too?

NOAH. They're all good children, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, all good people, thankful, god-fearing, and obedient.

HAM. To be exact, we never bothered much with obedience and god-fearing. Where are my brothers, my mother? Or don't I get an answer to that either?

NOAH. Look for yourself, Ham, and tell your mother to prepare the tenderest cut from the lamb's loin, gently roasted, and to bring it — for him — (*hesitates*) for a hungry, old, tired —

CALAN. Bum — for an old bum and liar, Ham, who should have been rotting in his grave long ago. Tell her that, Ham.

HAM. I know what I'll say. If he's got to eat, a tougher piece will do. (*Off.*)

NOAH, *hurrying after him*. The loin, Ham, the loin — please, I beg you, let it be the loin, make sure it's the loin. Do it for me, Ham. I'd go myself, but to leave him even for a minute makes me tremble.

HAM. It'll be all right, Father. (*Off.*)

NOAH, *back*. They don't understand the grace of beholding you, old Father. Don't hold it against them — time — oh time went ahead on nimble feet, and how gladly I fly back to the lost old days.

BEGGAR. I came for you, Noah — come, child, come — you obeyed me even into the last hour — I beg you as you begged Ham, grant me obedience.

NOAH. Speak Father, deny yourself no wish, ask, command.

BEGGAR. Leave the peace of this valley, Noah —

NOAH. Leave the land, give up my holdings?

BEGGAR. Go to the mountains and build.

NOAH. To the mountains with all my herds?

BEGGAR. Without the herds, Noah, only with your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives. Build in the mountains.

NOAH. But why should I retreat to the mountains and leave all I have?

BEGGAR. The flood is going to come, Noah — listen, you must build a house, a strong house of wooden planks. Look, like this — 300 ells long, 50 ells wide, and 30 ells high — a house to live in while the flood is rising. And let it rest loosely on its foundation so that the flood can lift it up, and you will live on the flood while the world disappears before your eyes. Let it be thus.

CALAN. Build, Noah. Build strong and long and high and wide — a floating house — and you can watch from the roof as your herds drown.

NOAH. A flood, Father? Why must there be a flood?

BEGGAR. God is sorry he made man. You alone are worth saving, you and your sons and your sons' wives and children.

NOAH. But you, Father, what are you worthy of?

BEGGAR. I will find my way back to my time, I will find the past days again.

CALAN. But you'll have to give him camels to ride and cattle to drive away his sorrow, Noah — otherwise he won't get on his way.

BEGGAR. And then, Noah, consider your herds closely, take your best breeding animals of all kinds and food for them and your family with you into the floating house. But you must give all your other goods and stored-up property to your neighbor, Calan, because he helped you once in adversity. (*To Calan:*) If your God is stronger than Noah's he will save you and your property from the flood. (*To Noah:*) Give it to him, give him everything today — say the word now, let him become master now. (*Ahire comes with dishes in both hands.*) I will not eat until you promise to do as I say.

CALAN. Say the word, Noah — say it to Chus, he'll cut this clever adviser into little pieces for you. (*To beggar:*) You think I'd reward you? You can be sure, if we find you outside, you're dead — Chus, look at him closely, wherever you see him again let him die by the sword.

*Noah has gone to meet Ahire; he has taken the dishes and has spoken softly with her. She looks at the Beggar and shakes her head.*

AHIRE. He is like him. He has his eyes, Noah, and his beard, and almost his voice. Let him eat and rest and then give him something for the road. You have strange visions, poor man — be charitable but don't be foolish — no, no, the dead stay dead, Noah.

*Ahire off, Noah offers Beggar the dishes, but Beggar refuses, smiling.*

NOAH, *calling after Ahire.* Send a cool drink with Awah. *He kneels in front of Beggar and holds up dishes. Beggar refuses again.*

BEGGAR. Your word, Noah, my beloved son.

NOAH, *oppressed.* Oh Father — to give away all my herds

and go to the mountains, a poor man — how could anyone promise that?

CALAN. Go ahead, promise, Noah — listen, you know I'm your friend — look here. (*He gives Chus the sack. To Chus:*) Carry it out and let him escape. (*Chus goes off with the sack.*) Let him set the flood in motion if he can. Go to the mountains and build, then if my God calmly blows the flood away, as I know he will, you can come back and claim your herds — hoof by hoof and horn by horn — take them back from my hands as once before. But then we'll sacrifice together to that God whose child I am.

BEGGAR, *to Noah*. If you obey my word, the blessing I gave you when I died will be increased a hundredfold. Grant me obedience, Noah. Have you forgotten who I am?

CALAN. On the other hand, you're right, Noah — why should you want to live when everyone else is going to die — especially since they will die guiltless, since their guilt is God's fault. That takes some thinking about. Die with us if the flood can't do anything but come. You're not even to blame for your piety, it's not your fault.

BEGGAR. Your obedience will bear fruit a hundredfold, Noah. *Awah enters with the water container, stands near Calan, throws hands up to her face, dropping container.*

NOAH, *picking up container*. That's all right, Awah, only a few drops were spilled. (*Awah looks around.*) What do you see, child?

AWAH. The world is less than nothing, and God is everything — I see nothing but God.

BEGGAR. Believe her, Noah, she saw God.

AWAH, *covering her ears*. God is the enormous silence. I hear God.

BEGGAR. Believe her, Noah, she heard God.

CALAN, *touching Awah*. Here I am, Awah, look at me.

AWAH. Don't disturb me. (*Looks around her.*) Everything God, everything God!

CALAN. Do you see me, don't you hear me? It is I, Calan, Awah.

AWAH. Yes, Lord, I hear how your flood will spoil all flesh. Yes, Lord, I see: we will live, the raven flies, the dove flies,

the mountain of salvation, Ararat, towers above the flood!

BEGGAR. Listen to her, Noah, God speaks with her.

CALAN. Speak to me, Awah, it's Calan.

*Awah bends down for the dropped container, looks around astonished, laughs and takes it from Noah.*

AWAH. You caught it when I dropped it, Father? Just listen what Japheth told me — when I was sitting in the tent, scolded and crying, he said people don't catch lice from sheep and lambs. Then he kissed the tears away and let me take a little water to wash. (*To Calan:*) I had a vision of many clouds in the sky, and water rising all around over all — it was cool the way it is at home in the mountains. Oh Calan, why did you bring me here, into this drought?

NOAH. Wait just a little while, Awah, we'll leave this drought for the cool mountains. Even today, or tomorrow, we'll travel fast and not look back. (*To Calan:*) Take all my herds, Calan, hold them tight in your hands. I will never ask to have them back.

AWAH. Is God in the mountains too? The messengers promised that I would see and hear him.

NOAH, *cheerfully*. God is great and the mountains too rest in God, Awah. God is everything, the world is less than nothing, remember what I tell you.

AWAH, *shaking her head*. How can he come to us, if we're so tiny in him? (*Laughs.*) How eager I am for the mountains!

BEGGAR, *pitifully*. I'm hungry, Noah — I need a bite. Your obedience will bear fruit a hundredfold.

NOAH. Take and eat from my hands, Father. Look, it's the loin and tender fat moistens the tissue through and through.

CALAN. If God is everything, what about the evil in the world?

*He follows Awah with his eyes, walks around Noah and the Beggar, shakes his head, shrugs his shoulders and walks slowly off.*

## ACT V

1. *A CLEARING IN THE WOODS AT THE FOOT OF A MOUNTAIN. Noah's Ark is visible in the background. Night, rain and storm. Calan and Chus.*

CALAN. They put some food out when it got dark. Eat, child.

CHUS. I can't — eating is like a shriek in my ears, breathing is a shriek, all life is a shriek, which dies only at the sound of your voice — speak!

CALAN. I can go no further, Chus; live, child, while you can.

CHUS. Have pity. Death crouches in my ears and roars at my soul. Take out your sword and kill this death, so that I become like all others — no sound, no pain — use it.

CALAN. Take hold of its point and guide it to where your heart rises. Now.

CHUS. I thank you for your compassion — there's the spot — now push. (*He falls.*)

CALAN, *listening intently over him.* Still a whisper of life, the merest breath, another, the weave of warmth above his heart, so faint, and now a quiet nothing — finished. (*Sits down.*) I'll keep watch and wait until the body is cold.

*The Leper and the Shepherd grope their way near; in the dark Calan remains unnoticed.*

SHEPHERD. Your cursing has tired you out, you're quite hoarse. Here's Noah's settlement, here he drove us off. Everything sleeps — go to sleep, I'll watch over you.

LEPER. If we go on in this grimy blackness, we'll topple to our deaths. Give me some covering and let me sleep. I'm starved, but God and Noah need it all for themselves. Hoarse? Yes, but once more: life be damned! (*He lies down; the Shepherd sits near him. Silence.*)

CALAN. Where are you going?

SHEPHERD. We were looking for the pass over the mountains. But the clouds hung dense over all and then sank down heavy on us, pushed us to the ground. We are fleeing them into the valley.

CALAN. The time is ripe.

SHEPHERD. What do you mean?

CALAN. If you want to earn yourselves something to eat, help me dig a grave here for my dead child. Let us wait while he's still warm.

SHEPHERD. I cannot dig, sir, I have no hands. Calan ordered them cut off, and Chus, his servant, did it.

CALAN. I am Calan, and Chus, my child, otherwise known as my servant, lies here by me. He died. Your drops of blood have swelled to seas and drowned my herds and my domains. Your moans compelled all the world's clouds, drew them above our heads — the time is ripe. (*Silence.*) Why are you weeping? I can hear you well enough.

SHEPHERD. I do not know why.

CALAN. Why does he keep cursing, your hunchbacked friend?

SHEPHERD. He curses his God who gave him everything: leprous sores, a misshapen body — and a heart.

CALAN. He has a right to curse.

SHEPHERD. I would weep for God, who caused it all.

CALAN. But you curse Calan who took your hands? (*Silence.*) You must tell me — here I am, Calan, whose powers and substance God took in return for your hands. Then curse me, go ahead, for I have done worse to you than God did to that one with his sores and his deformities.

SHEPHERD. Curses rise from blindness, but I can see.

CALAN. What do you see?

SHEPHERD. I am ashamed to speak of God and have never spoken of him. The word is too big for my mouth. I know that he is not to be known, that is all my knowledge of him.

CALAN. That's right, it's because of Noah that I got to prattling about God. It's as though the maggots in my guts had said: Calan must eat meat, if he doesn't, he's unjust to us, therefore damn Calan.

LEPER, *awaking*. Whom are you talking to?

SHEPHERD. To Calan.

LEPER, *starting up*. To Calan? The great Calan?

CALAN. Calan has shrunk, he's poor, cold, hungry, and soaking wet — but it is Calan, brother.



LEPER. Poor and soaking and cold? And still you love life, Calan, and so you're lucky. Who is that sleeping near you?

CALAN. One who preferred dying to eating. You must help me dig a grave to bury him. Over there is a jug, hearten yourself, have some wine and food, for you are one who prefers eating to dying. (*Leper eats and drinks greedily.*) Eat and drink, no one begrudges you, but don't begrudge it your brother.

LEPER. He's not my brother.

CALAN. Then give him his share as a friend.

LEPER. He has no hands, can't lift the jug, no fingers to hold it.

CALAN. Hold it for him, then, let your hands carry it to his mouth.

LEPER. Too late, all gone.

CALAN. Now help me dig.

LEPER. Jackals too want a feed; it's a pity to deprive them of this fine meal. Calan, Calan, how you have sunk, sitting there in wretchedness among wretches, reduced to giving a ready ear to jeers and jibes. Oh, too bad about that old haughtiness — I grieve for you deeply, Calan.

CALAN. Do you value your life?

LEPER. Mine?

CALAN. Yours. Which out of brotherly wretchedness and friendship I shall rip from you with this sword. Too bad about this lovely sword, but if it can impress on you the meaning of brotherhood —

LEPER, *shaking Shepherd*. Get up, brother, is this a time for loafing, when frost and the wet are our only shelter! We are headed for warmer, drier parts.

SHEPHERD, *rising*. I'll go with you, provided no more cursing.

LEPER. Oh well — if you hadn't let them snip off your hands, you could cover your ears with them now. I had nothing to do with it, thank Calan for it. (*Both leave.*)

2. *A GREY DAY*. Calan is digging a grave. Zebid watches him.

CALAN. You threw away those wooden idols, Zebid, which you stole from your father when we left together. They got too heavy for you in the mountains. That was bad, Zebid.

Those are the best gods after all. They do not hold off suffering, but at least they don't bring it on — and now you are stuck with Noah's God.

ZEBID, *crying*. Is it true what they say, the whole world is filling up with water? (*Calan nods quickly.*) You're lying. (*But she continues to cry. Calan nods again.*) Well, what about the water, is it true or not?

CALAN. It's exactly as you like. Anyhow no one believes anything but what he wants to. You don't want all this water, so you don't believe it's there. Simple. You'd sooner have me lie than know the water is flooding the whole country — and so you believe that I lie.

ZEBID. Everyone's a liar around here, everyone except Ham.

CALAN. That's the way you want it to be, so go ahead and believe it.

ZEBID. If I cannot trust myself, whom can I trust?

CALAN. Trust Ham as you trust the firm earth. Have you fallen in love with Japheth yet?

ZEBID. I don't want to keep owing my life to him, but he keeps reminding me and expects me to love him. (*Weeps loudly.*) If they are all dead, then Mes is dead, Sin is dead, and Asad is dead, and so many many are dead. Abbir too. Have you really become a beggar, Calan? They are saying it, but they say it very quietly. (*Calan nods.*) You're lying.

CALAN, *nodding*. You're right, Zebid, look, I still have Chus. Help me put him in, then I shall truly be a beggar, if they want to call it that. (*They place him in the grave.*)

CALAN, *throwing earth on the pit*. He shall not drift in the water, he shall not be rocked by whirlpools with all my wives and children. Rest, Chus, my child.

ZEBID. Your child? Your servant!

CALAN. A master has servants, a beggar doesn't.

ZEBID. Are you going to be begging from us, Calan?

CALAN. Beg? What have you lackeys got to give! I want to watch and see how such lackeys swim. Now he is safely under ground, Zebid, and now the flood may come.

ZEBID. If we have to swim, you're not one to be sucked under. Ram too is dead, I almost forgot — O Calan, if only he were dead also! Once he baited Japheth so, that Japheth blushed

and stammered and stood there furious and still didn't dare strike. We were delighted, all who saw it, Calan, believe me.

CALAN. I believe you. But now Ram has his mouth full of water, and it's Japheth's turn to mock them without blushing. He makes up for the fun you had with Ram, and with Mes, and the many others. — There comes Noah, bent double leaning into the wind — oh, how artful is his step. I can see through him, he wants to drive me off. (*Noah enters.*)

NOAH, *to Zebid*. You must be freezing here in the wind, child — go inside, warm yourself, you are getting wet. (*Zebid goes off.*)

CALAN. I am cold and wet, Noah.

NOAH, *rubbing his hands*. I too am freezing, Calan.

CALAN. What have you decided, you and your sons?

NOAH, *looking around*. Have you eaten, Calan, was there enough wine in the jar? There's more if you want it.

CALAN. The time is ripe, Noah, what good is food and drink. The creatures of the wood are sheltered in your house, they have found compassion. I'll be satisfied with the least little space amidst them — and Calan is alone — a couple of wild-cats for Calan!

NOAH, *embarrassed*. Where is your sword, Calan?

CALAN. I have helped you many times, and you know it, and don't forget it, many times and willingly. Do the wild animals give you trouble? Why, I'll help you again — let's go inside, all will be taken care of in no time. (*Makes as though to move.*)

NOAH, *aghast, stopping him*. Not inside, don't go inside, Calan. There's no danger from the animals, they are devoutly quiet and gentle with one another. No, Calan, not the house.

CALAN. But I am freezing and wet, I want to get warm and dry out my clothes.

NOAH, *weeping*. You'll make yourself master over us, Calan. You will journey in God's house and make slaves of me and my sons. You know that, Calan.

CALAN. If God should permit such a thing, it will have proved to be God's will, that you know, Noah.

NOAH. Where is your sword?

CALAN. Here, there, somewhere — don't be afraid, Noah,

your life is in God's hands. For those were Noah's words of comfort for the one who lost his hands. (*Japheth comes running.*)

JAPHETH. Come into the house, Calan, warm and dry yourself. (*To Noah:*) Even if none of you want it, it cannot be otherwise, he belongs to us. (*To Calan:*) They deliberate this way and argue that way, how to deal with you, and they are agreed on just one point: that you are a robber and will find your just rewards in the flood. (*pulling him away*) O Calan, how good Zebid is with me, believe me, believe me, good and obedient and — Calan — she has but to touch me, and I am bitten, yes, deliciously gnawed to my very guts, believe me, Calan. Then I am like one transformed, no longer Japheth but almost like her, Zebid herself, as though I really am Zebid, and there is nothing like it in the world. Come into the house, come! (*They go off.*)

### 3. STORM. *Shem and Ham.*

HAM. Our women are going crazy — Calan here, Calan there. What do you think, Shem?

HAM. ~~SHEM.~~ You called me out here, Ham — I am listening to your word.

SHEM. We're already Calan's servants, nothing more — you, myself, all of us. You see that?

SHEM. Ham —

HAM. Wait! Father's wise to Calan — he's on this trip with us, and we are on this trip with him, and if it should happen that the storm eases, he'll take our women and shear the wool off our sheep and tear the fat from our ribs. Father is right.

SHEM. Ham —

HAM. Wait — let me finish — well, what do you think, Shem?

SHEM. I agree — father understands, you do, I do, too.

HAM. Is that all you know? It isn't much.

SHEM. It's no less than all of you know.

HAM. If we can slaughter cattle and kill wolves, surely we can also finish off Calan.

SHEM. I've pondered it all night long, Ham, and you know I have a cool head, but my heart is sick at the thought of murder.

Until there is a good opportunity and the moment is just right and as long as we can count on keeping our eyes open — Oh, Ham —

HAM. But, Shem, just think of Awah. Isn't that comfort and encouragement enough for what we have in mind?

SHEM. That's what you think. I am more worried over Awah on your account than Calan's. There, you draw back, Ham. I have noticed what I'd just as soon not have noticed.

HAM. What have I done? (*Shem is about to answer.*) I assume it is Calan we are discussing.

SHEM. But the conversation turned on you, Ham.

HAM. Well, now, I'm eager for it, Shem, very eager.

SHEM. You've taken a fancy to her, and that in itself is more than enough. And then these little liberties, so little they are seen and overlooked the same instant. But your desire keeps circling around her, Ham, and your longing for her has long lustful fingers.

HAM. Lust and longing and desire? I need a lot of time to think that one over. Lust and desire and longing, eh? But, Shem, shouldn't we rather be thinking of a suitable send-off for Calan, a send-off to somewhere, doesn't matter where? Lust and longing and desire — well, well. Who's ripped the ground here, Shem, looks like a grave.

SHEM. Like earth piled on someone. Who could it be?

HAM. You're not going to get any answer from him. Help me, Shem, let's question him with our nails — lust and longing and desire indeed! Too much is too much. (*They dig.*)

SHEM. Here's a hand sticking out, pull the arm, Ham, and up will come the head.

HAM. Chus! — Chus it is, and, as a matter of fact, Chus dead, that I am bold enough to assert — let him be, Shem, it is Chus, Calan's right hand, Calan, the second, while he lived — we are rid of this one. God graciously granted, as father would put it, that Calan's right withered — good to know there's one hand less raised against our freedom. Close the vault and let him lie as long as he can. Let him desire, Shem, grant him his lust and longing for rest. (*They throw earth back on the grave.*)

*Calan and Noah approach. Ham and Shem stand off to the side, listening.*

CALAN. You did build with blessed hands. God helped you and God loves the beasts as he loves you — yet for myself he has provided no shelter. Admit it, Noah, the way of animals does not smell exactly like God's praise and glory. I have seen, I know I have, your sons' bastards down in the valleys amid wolves; they yelped and snapped their jaws and fangs like any godless creature, and they perished as everything did, whereupon God waxed angry — wait, Noah, something else.

NOAH. Oh Calan, speak, but speak in kindness. Why have you brought me here?

CALAN. Now listen. See there — that's the grave of Chus, and Chus lies safely anchored in the earth, nor do I want to toss about in the waters amidst stinking beasts, who knows where, chewed by who knows what fish. Promise me, Noah, you will put me here beside him and inter me next to him. Will you?

NOAH. I, Calan?

CALAN. You, Noah.

NOAH. You in the grave, Calan? Does one bury the living?

CALAN. Living? No, the dead, Noah — I shall be dead when I have come to my corner.

NOAH, *wringing his hands*. Calan, Calan, you are living and you speak of dying?

CALAN. You must do that for me, you or one of you — Chus, who would have done it, demanded it of me and now I demand it of you. You or one of you. Why not, Noah, if God permits it — and for me who scorned God and am his foe!

NOAH. God will deal with you according to his will — don't torture me so, Calan, how can you still make fun.

CALAN. He whose son I am, Noah, he who put me into this life free and without fear — has forgotten me. Or, rather, he is done with caring for me, because he gave me much — and I thank him for all he did give. But I don't want Noah's God to drown me with cattle and camels. I am stronger than he, don't forget it, and want to die as befits a son who is no slave to his father. Now then.

NOAH. I shudder; God commands, do not kill.

CALAN. In that case I'll ride out the flood and mock your God. You will all be my servants — then your house will be my house, your wives my wives, and your hands will stir in tasks of

my devising. God is done with, God lets me hew his hands — is that how it is to be? (*To Ham and Shem:*) Come here, both of you, and ask a blessing of your father for this business. (*Shem and Ham stand undecided.*)

HAM. You are armed, Calan, a sword and two hands — throw it down, and turn your face away.

CALAN, *laughing*. My sword? Shall I let myself be slaughtered like a beast! No, Ham, my sword was born with me, my sword is part of me — if you mean to get at me, you must dare my sword. God, if he is stronger than I, will put swords into your hands and command them, as he commanded the building of the ark, to do his will. But if God gives you no swords, you are my slaves — look, just look what a trifling faith you have in him — declare your faith and you'll have swords in your hands.

THE VOICE OF THE LEPER. Mother, father, Noah, Calan, brothers, friends — mother, mother!

LEPER, *comes tottering with fear*. Oh oh oh, they're coming, oh, they're climbing.

CALAN, *shaking him*. Where's your handless guide, wretch, where have you left your friend?

LEPER. Calan? Am I with Calan? Noah, O Noah, help me, Noah!

CALAN, *striking him*. Speak — where is he?

LEPER, *looking over his back*. They're coming, they're climbing after me, thousands of bloated carcasses on the tide, hanging from trees and slapping against the mountain and heaving their bellies and rolling over each other and shoving themselves forward with the rising flood.

CALAN, *striking him*. Where have you left him?

LEPER. Oh, Calan, all my stinking curses are at my heels, mountains and mountains of curses, gagging and dumb, want to crush me between them, knock out my breath. (*Embraces Calan convulsively.*) Calan, Calan, help me, hold me, don't let them kill me!

*In the meantime Ham and Shem have approached. As the Leper embraces Calan, they suddenly loop ropes around both, tie them up and throw them upon the ground. Japheth joins them.*



HAM. The hands, Shem, the hands — tighter, tighter, hold the arms, round again, once more — a knot till their bones crack, pull, Shem, pull!

JAPHETH. Where is Calan — Calan, where are you?

HAM. Calan has hidden himself under a net, where are you, Calan?

*Pulls out Calan's sword.*

JAPHETH. Bound — you've bound him? What has he done to you?

HAM, *pushing him aside*. My hands are shaking, Shem, you take it and finish it, just plunge it in!

SHEM. My hands are not shaking, but my heart cannot do it, I don't understand this kind of business. You do it, Ham.

HAM, *coming close*. Get away, all of you, and don't look — why should your eyes slash at my hands. (*The sword falls to the ground.*)

CALAN. You do it, Japheth, pick it up and run it through both of us — do it, Japheth!

JAPHETH. I can't, Calan, there's blood in your body, and your sword is so terribly sharp. (*Runs off.*)

CALAN. Noah, Noah, remember all I've done for you; now do this for me, Noah, strike!

NOAH. Your life is in God's hands, Calan, place your heart at his feet, and he will loosen your fetters. Neither I nor my sons shall be your judges. (*To Shem and Ham:*) Come, children, the time is ripe for God's vengeance. (*Takes the sword and goes off.*)

HAM, *clapping Shem on the shoulder*. You're free, Shem, time has seasoned our freedom.

LEPER. Must I rot here with Calan? O you marvels, you heroes, you kings, O you divinities you! (*They are about to go; he screams louder.*) Your hands, oh, your clever, quick hands, you benefactors — Calan is your enemy, only he, but I, I am your friend, a pitiable, miserable particle of goodwill intended for your welfare. Turn us over, shove me on top, so I can breathe when he drowns — what harm have I ever done you, O you ornaments, O princes, O you paragons, you butchers, you rotters?

SHEM. He's right, Ham, why does he deserve this?

HAM. He? Well, let's give him his wish, let him lie on top and wait for a ripe old age. (*He rolls them over.*)

LEPER. Shem, oh Shem, how the ropes cut into my freezing flesh, oh Shem, how I would lick your feet, Shem, what have I done to deserve this?

CALAN. Go on, untie the poor fool.

LEPER. Untie me, my good friends, I'll do anything you say, and from my heart — but he must be slung in ropes coiled around and over — I despise him, I'll do it gladly, gladly.

HAM. And spoil our sweet freedom — he's got hands, Shem, and Calan will promise him half the world. We, Shem, are the lords of the earth. (*Pulls him away with him.*) Get a tight hold on your heart, and generation upon generation will bless you. (*Both leave.*)

#### 4. DARKNESS. *Calan and the Leper.*

LEPER. God is getting even with your crimes, Calan, God is doing it and whatever he does, he does to abundance. For this execrable existence that he wished on me I should get even with him, but it seems to me justice always strikes the wrong party, even now. God beat me to it, and in his hurry avenged himself on me. Do you think it's that God is just plain deaf? I suspect he's also blind, he certainly can't see in the dark, or else he'd be distinctly uncomfortable to find that we obviously are being treated with unjust equality. As though we were equally guilty! What about it, Calan? Do you think God might get fed up with the misery of this world? Do you think just for once he'd crash over backwards because he overstuffed himself with it, and because gutted human pain in its bitterness took a bite out of his majestic paunch, while the claws of prayers scratched gashes in his belly? Or is it possible he has a heart? I doubt it.

CALAN. Shut up, tormentor!

LEPER. What — am I a tormentor? Why then I'd be like God — God forbid that I should think that. No, tormenting he understands beyond all understanding and comprehension.

CALAN. The slaver drips from your mouth into my eyes and runs over my lips. Be quiet — as I am.

LEPER. Gnashing your teeth, Calan? (*Calan is silent.*) Calan — hey, Calan! Too proud to talk to me? I want to cure you

of your sin; see, I'll slobber the juice from my rotting mouth all over you, that will take care of your pride, and your groans will melt melodiously with mine. So we are lovers, lovingly coupled. If you and I don't exactly frolic in high spirits, at least we are nice and cozy, nice and cheerful. What do you say, meek brother Calan? (*Calan is silent. The Shepherd approaches crawling.*)

SHEPHERD. Who speaks of humility and cheer? Where there is cheer, there will I remain.

LEPER. Here, here, brother, here, in this slimy spot — here where we are rocking in wanton rapture — it's me, brother, me and Calan, tightly coiled in bands of true brotherhood.

CALAN. What way do you choose when all lead to ruin?

SHEPHERD. The rising waters pointed the way as I lay exhausted on the ground — the flood is filling up all lower depths and hounds every living thing upwards. I am wandering with the four-legged tribes who left their caves and dugouts and holes in the mountains. Do not stay here, get up and let us join the streams of moving creatures.

LEPER. What! Get up? Save us from our present glory, undo the knottings of skin and hemp and we shall wander together in cozy cheer.

SHEPHERD. I have no hands to help you.

CALAN. No, he has no hands, he has none, he cannot help, and the flood waters are hounding every living thing upwards.

LEPER. Serves you right, smack your lips, Calan, with the taste of God's just reward. But why should I, because you chopped off his hands, lie here in slimy cheer? You got what you had coming, why am I here, why me?

CALAN. I taste it all right — what came from my deeds. I'm getting what I deserve. But this avenging god is still not the true one. Noah's God is a violent God, as I was violent, and I shudder before such divinity. Here I lie in this muck and take pity on his puny grandeur. (*The Shepherd drops to the ground and thrashes about.*)

LEPER. What are you doing there, why whimper — mean to kill the world with your blows before it finishes you off?

SHEPHERD. The snapping, starving vermin, the throngs of a thousand ravenous beasts — they are upon me — (*pulls himself up and disappears.*)

LEPER. Upon you? Upon me too, tearing at my body — have pity, God, have pity, God — speak, God, say but one word in your defense, and I will listen. Speak, shout — just clear your throat! (*For a moment one hears nothing but the rustle of rain, then a low thunder in the distance.*) Oho, so that's your way! No: a half-answer, a damned shilly-shally, a truly lamentable defense, your distant growling dodges the question. Maybe you have a heart beating for all that, and wouldn't want to drive your beloved beasts from their feed? Yes, maybe, maybe, a sort of heart, a pretty gentle heart, as is proper and fitting for a gracious God toward his hungry guests. Fodder, that's what you are, Calan, fodder for ravaging beasts; listen to them wheeze and wail, feel the blaze of their fangs singeing your flesh, now you taste in your fingers what you once did to others — Calan —

5. *MIST AND A GREY LIGHT. Two shapeless figures roll on the ground. Noah, tightly wrapped, comes wading frightened through the mud. He puts a jar on the ground.*

NOAH. I heard whimpering all night long, all of us heard it, but my sons kept the door barred. Where are you — Calan, where are you? I have come to still your thirst.

FIRST FIGURE. Here, Noah, give me, give me.

NOAH. That was not Calan's voice — who are you, O pitiful ones?

FIRST FIGURE. I was Calan, but the animals have chewed my tongue, I cannot speak in my former voice — give me to drink.

NOAH, *drawing back*. Take what I leave here for you — I know you no longer.

FIRST FIGURE. The beasts sucked out our eyes, peeled the flesh off our fingers — we cannot see, we cannot reach — give us, Noah, give us.

THE OTHER FIGURE. Now speak of God's wrath or speak of God's justice, if you dare.

NOAH. That was Calan — Calan, is it you — poor Calan!

CALAN. Now speak of a just God, speak of God's vengeance, dare!

NOAH, *drawing back farther, his hands covering his eyes*. God's ways are just, but his might surpasses the strength of my

eyes, they cannot bear the sight of his work.

CALAN. When the rats tore my eyes from their sockets I began to see. I can bear the sight of God, I see God. (*Noah moves still further away.*) Are you still listening, Noah?

NOAH. Oh, Calan, what do you see — God is my shepherd, I shall not want. He will guide me through the flood and save me from destruction.

CALAN. That is the God of floods and of flesh, that is the God of whom they say the world is less than nothing and that God is all. But I can see the other God, of whom they shall say the world is big and God is less than nothing, a point, a spark. All things begin in him and all things end with him. He has no shape, no voice.

NOAH. Oh, Calan — poor Calan.

CALAN. Poor Noah! Ah, how glorious it is that God has no shape and cannot make words — words that issue from flesh — God is pure flame, a glimmering spark, and all things tumble from him, and all things return to the depths of his flame. He creates, and his creation creates him anew.

NOAH. Oh, Calan — God who passes immutable from eternity to eternity?

CALAN. I, I too, will journey to that place from which I was cast, and through me does God grow and with me change into the new — how glorious it is, Noah, that I have no longer a form but am finally only flame and abyss in God — now I sink toward him — God becomes Calan, and Calan God — He in my lowliness, I in his splendor — united as one.

HAM, *rushing in*. Where — where are you, father, what keeps you! There were jolts and tremors in the depths of the earth and deserts of flood are rising into mountains, and their walls are crashing down on us — live, father, live, lest God's wrath bury you with the lost!

*He pulls him away as one hears the roar of approaching tidal waves.*

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SEATED OLD WOMAN, DETAIL, 1933, BRONZE

THE LONELY ONE, 1911, OAK

CRYING WOMAN, 1923, PLASTER

OLD WOMAN WITH CANE, 1913, WALNUT

THE WAITING ONE, 1924, PLASTER

THE SINGING MAN, 1930, ZINC

MAN READING BOOK, 1936, PLASTER

LAUGHING OLD WOMAN, 1937, WALNUT

*The order of the first and fifth titles should be reversed.*

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## A LETTER FROM BARLACH ON KANDINSKY

To Reinhard Piper

I have not yet had a chance to read your book carefully [Vasily Kandinsky's *Das Geistige in der Kunst*, published by Piper] and I can see plainly that I'll not be able to get to it very soon either. After the few bits I've snatched from it here and there, it's not as though I could, or even would care to, deny the author the most penetrating intellectuality. On the contrary, the book seems to me to be sincerely intended. All the more resoundingly does the bolt clank into place, as far as I am concerned. Out of sheer instinct I'll not go along with him.

An abyss opens at my feet here, unimaginably deep. Frequently during these days I am urged to turn in various directions, confessing to people that I am a barbarian. So as a barbarian I am willing to believe this honest man when he claims that dots, smudges, lines and spots, à la pages 43 and 88, do shake his soul, and that this spiritual convulsion goes above and beyond the tasteful experience of ornamentation. But the point is that I am only willing to *believe* him and then — good-by! We could talk for a thousand years and not come to any understanding. I am, I might say, not entirely inexperienced. I myself have had periods when I've just sat and "created" lines. Those, then, were the intervals, the pauses, in which brain and hand were indeed willing but every other part of me seemed stupefied.

Here I'd like to set down a word that will not be without value to you, a Schopenhaurian: Compassion. I have to be able to feel pity, and even the kind of pity that is forbidden — that is to say, self-pity for being so lowly, so far from measuring up to those who surely can feel pity for me. Pity need not be pitiful. I can feel it even in the delight I experience in the heroic and the humorous. I could even say: vicarious suffering or vicarious delight — my own, of course. The kind of pity I mean is a participation that goes so far in understanding that it puts itself in the place of actually enacted events. Could you possibly feel compassion for the "formal" events on page 98 or would you like to step into the place of page 88? It is a question without a question mark. Naturally I could imagine something *into* and shape something *out* of these examples. I even believe that most things and the best things come about in such a way that the harmony of chaos or arrangements of chance stir the desire to rob the untouched and indistinct of their virginity by means of art, and thus make them communicative in a spiritually fruitful way and consciously alive as well. This, then, would be the reverse of Kandinsky's process.

We must by all means come to terms about the language we use in order to know anything at all. A person could say the most beautiful, the noblest things in Chinese and I wouldn't even prick up my ears. If, therefore, I am to enter into a spiritual experience, it must speak in a language through which I can experience in turn the deepest and

most secret things. My native language is the most suitable way for me to achieve this, and my artistic native language is simply the human figure or the milieu, the object through which or in which man lives, suffers, rejoices, feels, thinks. Beyond this I cannot go.

Nor can I concern myself with a kind of Esperanto-art. It's precisely the "vulgar," the universal-human element, the primordial feelings of the race that are the great, the eternal matters. What man has suffered and can suffer, his greatness, his concerns (including myth and his dream of the future), with these I am engaged. But my private little feelings or the most unique of my sensations are of course of no consequence, are merely mood and fancy, if through them I step out of the ring of human affairs.

Man, as ego, has to have his "self" engaged, the high and the low, no matter which. But neither page 88 nor page 98 touches my "self" in the slightest. If, contrary to my opinion, human figures are represented on these pages, they are so obscure that they merely mystify. I have no other feelings when I look at them.

Nor do I believe that it's possible to present a new art form by logical processes, as Mr. Kandinsky imagines — except as literature, as intellectual exercise. However, my criticism is valueless since I the critic, am not of the same species as the creative writer. I could well imagine that Kandinsky might occasionally stand unmoved before actualities that shake me to the very core. He might say to me: "You're not an artist, but an actor! You act 'as if' these feelings were there. I, on the contrary, produce ideas and feelings, moods, emotions, by wireless, as it were — without any tangible medium, through direct transmission."

It would be fine if feelings presented themselves to us by arrangement. Blue signifies this and yellow that — this can be stated, of course, but whether they have the almighty power to make their command a compulsion is doubtful. But if colors and lines consist of human forms, or vice versa, then they possess power, for they acquire this power from the human soul. How often it happens that on walls or furniture one sees colors and forms that suddenly become image through the medium of imagination and complement that infuses them with a soul. In some such manner the event is drawn into and becomes part of my being, whereas before it was outside of me. At best it had prior to this only moved the perpetually hungry nerves of my eyes by being less boring, more colorful, more attractive than all other objects surrounding it. The fact that the ego can be engaged in a manner completely apart from the artistic is something else again.

This afternoon I went for a walk in the woods with Klaus. We came back home at dusk. But before that, at the railroad station, we looked at the Christmas painting by Grünewald in the *Woche* . . .

Güstrow, December 28, 1911

# BERTOLT BRECHT

## *Notes on the Barlach Exhibition*

Translated by Daniel C. O'Neil

The Barlach Exhibit and the discussion of it must be taken as an indication of the important place given to art in the German Democratic Republic. The discussion may still lack the thoroughness and universality which is to be desired, and I find unpleasant the impatient and contentious tone of some of the comments, but Barlach's work has never before been discussed for so large a critical audience.

\*

I consider Barlach one of the greatest sculptors we Germans have had. The total concept, the significance of what he has to say, the technical mastery, the beauty without beautification, grandeur without distortion, harmoniousness without mere smoothness, the vitality without brutality make Barlach's sculptures masterpieces. At the same time, not everything that he has created pleases me, and if it is true that we can learn much from him, it is nevertheless permissible to ask: What? When? Through whom?

\*

Barlach's religious sculptures do not hold much meaning for me, nor in general do all those that have something of the mystical. And I cannot rightly make up my mind whether he didn't now and then simply offer up his beggars and care-dulled mothers to that religious feeling which in pious resignation accepts economic *and* spiritual poverty. But in those of his sculptures which are, to me, the most beautiful, he makes the human element, the social potential, triumph gloriously over deprivation of its rights, over humiliation, and this shows his greatness.

\*

There is the Beggar Woman with a Bowl, in bronze, of 1906. A powerful personality with a hard self-assurance, from whom no gratitude for alms is to be expected. She appears to be immune against hypocritical persuasion, by a corrupt society, that one can accomplish something by diligence and making one-

self useful. She coldly places on this society the blame for the fact that her strength lies unused. In 1906 there were women who were declaring war against this society; this woman is not one of them. There were artists then, too, who were portraying these fighters against society (right at this time Gorki created his *Vlasova*); but Barlach does not belong to these artists. That is perhaps a pity, but I am ready and willing to confine myself to his contribution, and to thank him for it.

\*

Then there is the *Man Cutting a Melon*, a bronze of 1907. We will scarcely find in German plastic art of recent centuries a work which portrays with such sensual power a man of the people eating. (Am I wrong? I will be grateful to be corrected.) He has seated himself in exactly the way that is best suited to this activity, and he hasn't lost himself in his task. One could very well talk with him about working conditions and about some other things, too. He may not yet have enough knowledge, but I think that his class need not be ashamed of him, at least as an ancestor.

\*

I like the *Three Singing Women*, a wood sculpture of 1911, stout female figures leaning against one another and singing resoundingly in all directions, because the combination of strength and singing pleases me.

\*

The *Singing Man*, a bronze of 1928, is singing differently from the three women of 1911, boldly, with independent bearing, clearly working at his singing. He is singing by himself, but apparently has listeners. Barlach's sense of humor sees to it that he is a bit vain, but no more than is compatible with artistic performance.

\*

That the angel of the *Güstrow Memorial* (bronze, 1927) overpowers me is not surprising. It has the face of the unforgettable Käthe Kollwitz. I like angels like that. And although we have never seen an angel or a man fly, nevertheless flight is here gloriously represented.

\*

The *Blind and the Halt*, stucco of 1919, a blind man who is



leading along a lame man. The sculpture is not executed as parables generally are, namely in more or less abstract form with unindividualized figures. It is carried out realistically, and the actual individual happening gains the quality of a parable. (It's a somewhat different thing, whether I imagine the land-owning class when I hear the words, "A rich man had a vineyard," or whether, when I see a blind man dragging along a lame man, and uphill at that, I think of the trade unions, which in 1919 were pulling the Social-Democratic Party along. I am by no means certain that Barlach was thinking of this kind of thing.) The group has a wonderful internal energy because of the faithfully realistic treatment of the limbs as they perform their heavily burdened movements.

\*

Old Woman Dancing, tinted plaster, of 1920. A sculpture with a humor which is extraordinarily rare in German plastic art. With what an elegant flourish the old woman raises her skirt, to try one more little caper! Her gaze is directed upward: she is delving in her memory for the right steps.

\*

The Kiss, Groups I and II, bronzes of 1921, are of great interest, because here the sculptor developed his theme, and by roughening the material, hence actually by a process of coarsening, achieved a greater intimacy. The work is a pleasant departure from the pretty, sexless Amor-and-Psyche groups in petty-bourgeois parlors.

\*

From here on, in the sculptures of the years following 1933, one must pay attention to the dates. There is the Man Reading a Book, the bronze of 1936. A man sitting, bent forward, holding a book in heavy hands. He is reading avidly, assuredly, critically. He is clearly searching in the book for the solutions to pressing problems. Goebbels would probably have called him a "filthy intellectual" (*Intelligenzbestie*). I like the Man Reading a Book better than I do Rodin's famous Thinker, who only displays the difficulty of thinking. Barlach's sculpture is more realistic, more concrete, and non-symbolic.

\*

In the case of the Old Woman in the Cold (teakwood of 1937), a cowering hired girl or poor tenant-farmer's wife who

has so obviously been left in the lurch, physically and mentally, by her society, it is the big, work-worn hands which are striking; these she was unable to guard against the cold. She performs the act of freezing like a chore, and she shows no anger. But the sculptor shows anger, far more anger than pity; let us thank him for this.

\*

The Seated Old Woman, a bronze of 1933. Once again our gaze is directed to face and hands, but this woman has spirit; her face and hands reveal what could be called nobility, if this word were not linked with the Hindenburgs and Hohenzollerns. (Once again, by the way, the clothing is treated masterfully. It doesn't merely permit us to imagine the body, but rather reveals it completely, as a happy rhyme discloses a thought. One tiny detail makes it thoroughly realistic: the woolen muffler.) The body is of great beauty, it shows delicacy and strength in noble proportions. The old woman sits up straight, she is thinking. Her smile betokens experiences which she has gathered like spikes of grain along her path, one after the other. Standing before this sculpture, made in the fateful year of 1933, one is led to memories and comparisons. A year earlier than that, Weigel played the role of Vlasova on the Berlin stage. Instead of passivity, activity; instead of the victim of inhumanity, humanity. I can imagine a worker giving Barlach's old woman a nudge with his elbow: "Rule! You have everything it takes."

\*

I can't do very much with symbolism, but in the case of Barlach's "The Bad Year 1937" (in plaster), I should like to stretch a point and give my approval. It is a young woman who has grown gaunt with hunger; she is standing up straight, wrapped in a shawl. It could be the Seated Old Woman when she was young. She is looking anxiously into the future, but her apprehension testifies to the optimism of the sculptor. The sculpture signifies a passionate disapproval of the Nazi regime, of Goebbels-optimism. I can well imagine this young woman as an activist of 1951.

\*

From the same bad year of 1937 comes the Laughing Old Woman (in wood). Her gaiety is irresistible. Her laughter is

like singing. It has relaxed her whole body, which appears almost young. Her laughing, too, Goebbels and Rosenberg would have watched with little pleasure, I think. It is said, Barlach made his Laughing Old Woman when he heard that many of his sculptures, removed from the museums as "decadent," were being sold in Switzerland to hook foreign money for the manufacture of cannons. It is interesting how historical perspective deepens our enjoyment of such works.

\*

All these sculptures seem to me to bear the mark of realism. They have much that is essential, and nothing that is superfluous. The concept, the actual models, and the material determine the felicitous final form. Barlach's love for people, his humanism are also undeniable. It is true, of course, that he offers man little hope; and a number of his most beautiful works arouse sorry thoughts of the German *Misere*, which has so harmfully affected our arts. The "idiocy of rural life" which stamps its cruel brand on Barlach's figures is not the object of his attack; sometimes they even attain the look of the "earthbound," "eternal," "divinely willed." Nevertheless, if a tractor-driver of today is able to look with any benefit at these marvelous representations of poor people, it is only because the artist conferred on his class, so long oppressed in a world turned brutish, a virtual monopoly of humanity. — Barlach writes: "It is probably true that the artist knows more than he is able to say." But perhaps it is actually the case that Barlach is able to say more than he knows.

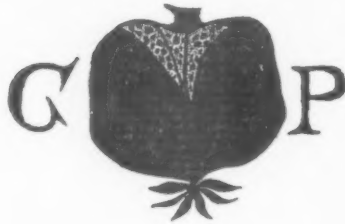
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I shall make no comment here about the works which I like less (such as *The Avenger*, *The Doubter*, *The Forsaken Ones*, etc.), since in these examples, it seems to me, the shaping represents a misshaping of reality. And I am of the opinion that our coming generation of artists ought not to be called upon to learn from such works. However, it is inappropriate to lump all these works together, especially when neither the one group nor the other is treated concretely. Abstract criticism never leads to realistic art.

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## Mechanized Doom: Ernest Hemingway and the Spanish Civil War

THE SPANISH EARTH, a documentary film written in 1937 by Ernest Hemingway and directed by Joris Ivens, begins with the camera focused upon the soil itself. From the very beginning the film is an assertion of an intimate relationship between men and the land: "This Spanish earth is hard and dry and the faces of the men who work on [this] earth are hard and dry from the sun." The land must be defended, in the film as in reality, against an enemy armed with the most up-to-date mechanized equipment. The land is defended, and the film ends with the waters rushing through the newly constructed irrigation ditch and bringing life to the sun-baked soil. Floods of American aid never reached the Loyalists of Spain, but that is history's irony and not Hemingway's. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* begins and ends similarly—with the "pine-needled floor of the forest." The enemy possesses the weapons of a technological society and, in the eyes of the hero Robert Jordan, General Franco's Heinkels move like "mechanized doom." In both novel and film, there is a struggle between men and machines.

Considering the historical facts, it is not surprising that there should be this common element. When the Spanish army, backed by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Spain and by the funds of millionaire Juan March, revolted, on the night of July 17, 1936, the republican government of Spain was saved



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from immediate destruction by the action of poorly armed and often unarmed civilians. The Fascist government of Italy had dispatched aircraft to General Franco's insurgent forces before the revolt began, and German aircraft were used soon after to ferry Moroccan troops to the mainland. As German and Italian aid increased, it became obvious to military observers that mechanized weapons, especially tanks and airplanes, were playing a major if not a decisive role in the fighting. Military historians studied the Spanish war as a testing ground for the newest theories of mechanized warfare: General Duval wrote *Les Leçons de la Guerre d'Espagne*; Hoffman Nickerson commented upon the obsolescence of the unmechanized "mass armies" in *The Armed Horde*, and, most importantly, Basil Henry Liddell Hart, in a series of books and articles, analyzed the new importance of the *Blitzkrieg* and *Panzerdivision*. As documents captured after the fall of Hitler's Reich testify, Hermann Goering was particularly anxious to test his newly created *Luftwaffe*. Popular magazines, such as *Time* and *The Saturday Evening Post*, discussed Giulio Douhet's theory of methodical bombardment of civilian populations for the purpose of demoralization.

Since the London Non-Intervention Committee of 1936-1939 and the American embargo of 1937 were disastrously effective in reducing the imports of the republicans and quite ineffective in halting the flow of men and munitions to General Franco's increasingly Fascistic Burgos Government, the disparity in equipment continued and widened. It was, therefore, perfectly natural that bombing planes and armored tanks should become, in the writings of Loyalist-sympathizers, symbols for the enemy; the symbols corresponded to the historical situation. It was quite as natural that these pro-Loyalist writings should emphasize the plight of the badly armed or completely unarmed republicans, especially when these republicans were the peasants whose primitive conditions of life left them almost completely helpless when attacked by the mechanized weapons of a technological civilization. It is, therefore, not surprising that, in *The Spanish Earth* and in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, a

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## Mechanized Doom

symbolic struggle between men and machines forms an important part of Ernest Hemingway's vision of reality, a vision which, in the complex way that art is related to the rest of human experience, is based upon the historical facts. I shall try to show, first, the degree to which Hemingway's interpretation of the fight against Fascism was dramatized, particularized, as the struggle of men against machines; and, second, to suggest one way in which this interpretation can be helpful in exploring the multifarious sources of the extraordinarily passionate concern which thousands of Americans felt for the fate of the Spanish Republic.

### I

From his earliest stories, from the Nick Adams episodes of *In Our Time* to the fable of *The Old Man and the Sea*, Ernest Hemingway has dealt, among other things, with man in the natural landscape. Even within the general lostness of *The Sun Also Rises*, the characters find themselves briefly while fishing in Spain, near Pamplona. For Hemingway, Spain is an elemental symbiosis of man and nature. What are the rituals described in Hemingway's paean to bull-fighting, *Death in the Afternoon*, if not a stylized representation of man's organic relationship to nature? As if applying the old saw about Europe being cut off at the Pyrenees, Hemingway looks upon Africa and Spain as a unit. In *The Green Hills of Africa* the mechanized world enters to destroy the hitherto uncorrupted world of nature. The book opens with a hunt ruined by the passing of a truck. This is put into the simplest possible language: "The truck had spoiled it." Later, the theme is generalized:

A continent ages quickly once we come. The natives live in harmony with it. But the foreigner destroys. . . . A country wears out quickly unless man puts back into it all his residue and that of all his beasts. When he quits using beasts and uses machines, the earth defeats him quickly. The machine can't reproduce, nor does it fertilize the soil.

What Hemingway seemed to discover in the Spanish war was that the machine is not merely passively destructive and biologically sterile: the war proved that the machine can also

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become an agent of destruction. Thus, writing in the *New Republic* in May 1937, he said:

There is nothing so terrible and sinister as the track of a tank in action. The track of a tropical hurricane leaves a capricious swath of complete destruction, but the two parallel grooves the tank leaves in the red mud lead to scenes of planned death worse than any the hurricane leaves.

Before dramatizing in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* the conflict between the values associated with the natural landscape and the values associated with the machine, Hemingway wrote several short stories and also a play, all concerned with the Spanish Civil War. The stories, which appeared in *Esquire*, are set for the most part in Madrid. Hemingway himself feels that these stories are inferior in technique and has refused requests to reprint them. The play, *The Fifth Column*, is set in Madrid's Hotel Florida. It is a wooden play about a Vassar girl (with long legs) and a counterspy for the International Brigades. If the play has any enduring meaning, it is that Ernest Hemingway could not dramatize the Spanish war with these stick figures; the play violates its author's own often-repeated rule—the writer must always tell the truth as he sees it, and the truth for Ernest Hemingway was not to be seen in the Hotel Florida. It was not even in Madrid; it was closer to the peasants and the gypsies, closer to the earth, closer to the pine-needled floor of the forest.

The first thing one notices about *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is, naturally, the epigraph taken from a meditation by John Donne. Ordinarily, we remember best the lines which give the book its title: "And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." Hemingway uses the epigraph as a statement of the theme of brotherhood, of human solidarity, of the involvement of all men in humanity itself. The statement, however, is not separable from the imagery of the passage:

No man is an *Iland* intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*; if a *Clod* bee washed away by the *Sea*, *Europe* is the lesse. . . .

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The images of the earth, of islands, continents, the main, a clod, are not accidental and not unimportant. Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his story "Ethan Brand," described all men as linked in a "magnetic chain of humanity," and Herman Melville, in Chapter LXXII of *Moby-Dick*, used a rope tied between Queequeg and Ishmael to symbolize the "precise situation of every mortal that breathes," the "Siamese connexion with a plurality of other mortals." Hemingway's use of Donne's metaphor of the earth, rather than the more obvious metaphors of chain or rope, would be scant grounds on which to base a thesis if it were not for the accumulation of such seemingly trivial bits of evidence. Consider, for instance, two essays, both entitled "On the American Dead in Spain," in which Hemingway uses this same imagery:

This spring the dead will feel the earth beginning to live again. For our dead are a part of the earth of Spain now and the earth of Spain can never die.

The dead do not need to rise. They are a part of the earth now and the earth can never be conquered. For the earth endureth forever.

One need only finish the quotation, "And the sun also riseth," to feel the unity of Hemingway's best writing.

Robert Jordan, "a peece of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*," does *not* join the International Brigades. Two British volunteers described fighting in the wreckage of Madrid's University City, beneath the busts of "Plato, Spinoza, Aristotle and Voltaire," and behind bullet-proof "barricades . . . of Indian metaphysics and early nineteenth-century German philosophy," but Robert Jordan joins a guerrilla band in the mountains—a band which fights on horseback, a band whose previous accomplishments include the destruction of a troop-train. Robert Jordan fights side by side with Anselmo, a man of natural wisdom. The two trust each other by instinct, but Pablo, the leader of the band, is suspicious and grants the American a tentative approval only after witnessing his knowledge of horses, the same horses which subsequently bring out what little humanity is left in Pablo. Later still, horses play a vital

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role in the climax of Chapter XXVI, in the terrifying conflict between El Sordo's band, sprawled behind the dead bodies of their mounts, and the Fascist patrol. El Sordo's men hold out until the dive bombers come. Then all is determined. On a hillside, where men are naturally accustomed to survey their dominions, the band is uncovered and helpless. They are all killed.

Those less grim sections of the novel, the episodes which concern the affair with Maria, have been condemned as extraneous, but, looking specifically at the theme of the earth and the machine, one notes that Maria, Roberto's beloved "rabbit," is somehow identified with the Spanish earth that was then being violated figuratively as Maria was violated literally. Maria's shaved head is so realistic a detail that one is surprised to see an obvious symbolism here as well. The *least* that one can say is that Maria's story parallels certain aspects of Spanish history. Paired with Maria is Pilar, a sort of Iberian Earth-Mother who is accustomed to having the world itself "move" during her love affairs, who had lived "nine years with three of the worst paid matadors in the world," and who reminds us again and again of the love-making and bull-fighting that, for Hemingway, represent Spain as it should have been.

In symbolic opposition to the cluster of values represented by the two bands, their mounts, and the earth itself, we have the steel bridge. Just as the lighthouse dominates Virginia Woolf's novel, so the bridge controls and unifies the action of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. In one sense it is the center of a series of concentric circles; in another it is the point towards which the elements of the action converge. No matter what geometric metaphor is used to plot the book upon a plane surface, it is certain that the bridge is central. "That bridge," thinks Robert Jordan, "can be the point on which the future of the human race can turn." The character of each person is determined by his or her relation to the bridge. The steel bridge is the emblem of the technological society and at the same time the path over which the *Panzerdivision* of the enemy will come. Pablo is, of course, against the demolition of the

## Mechanized Doom

bridge. Pilar is for it, because she understands its significance: "I am for the Republic. . . . And the Republic is the bridge." Robert Jordan defines himself by the bridge: "You're a bridge-blower now. Not a thinker." At the end, he once more identifies himself with the bridge: "As Jordan goes, so goes the bloody bridge. . . ." The bridge *is* destroyed, but Robert Jordan, escaping on horseback, is hit by a shell fired from an enemy tank and mortally wounded.

One need not, moreover, rely exclusively upon the action of the novel or upon the symbolic oppositions, for the characters speak out. Anselmo asserts bitterly, "We must take away their planes, their automatic weapons, their tanks, their artillery, and teach them dignity." And Pilar is completely explicit: "The sight of those machines does things to me. We are nothing against such machines." Looking up at the Heinkels overhead, Robert Jordan thinks they are like "sharp-nosed sharks of the Gulf Stream," but only for a moment does he link the machine with the natural menace. As the tank was, in the dispatches which appeared in the *New Republic*, worse than the hurricane, so the bombers are worse than the very worst of nature.

But these, wide-finned in silver, roaring, the light mist of their propellers in the sun, these do not move like sharks. They move like no thing there has ever been. They move like mechanized doom.

Clearly then, for Hemingway the Spanish Civil War was dramatized as, among other things, a struggle waged by men close to the earth and to the values of a primitive society against men who had turned away from the earth, men who had turned to the machine and to the values of an aggressive and destructive mechanical order. When Hemingway addressed the American Writers' Congress in 1937, he spoke of Spain and of the writer's responsibility to "write truly and having found what is true, to project it in such a way that it becomes a part of the experience of the person who reads it." Considering the facts both of Spanish history and of Hemingway's own career prior to 1936, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* seems the natural result of Hemingway's determination to write as truly as he could.

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### II

Early in the course of the Spanish war, the *New Republic*, which had printed Hemingway's dispatches from Spain, presented in an editorial the image of the machine-as-menace.

Women and children torn to pieces by aerial bombs as they go to market, crowded building and boulevards . . . shattered by artillery, suburbs and outlying parks made into playgrounds for grinding tanks, men and women . . . sprayed to death . . . by machine guns in power-diving pursuit-planes—this is Madrid today.

There is no sense of human agency behind the weapons of the Fascists; there is only the sense of impotent humanity beneath omnipotent machines. This sense of impotence and this image of a conflict between men and machines runs through a variety of writings and is found in the visual arts as well. It is well, for the sake of clarity, to concentrate upon the most nearly ubiquitous symbol of technological warfare—the airplane.

Herbert Matthews, of the *New York Times*, described his own feelings of powerlessness before the then-experimental *Luftwaffe*: "It is a terrible moment when one can hear a bomber directly overhead, knowing its power of destruction and feeling so helpless." Irving Pflaum, of the *United Press*, admitted that his "one real fear" was "that methodical, systematic, terroristic bombing . . . may be one of the decisive factors in future wars. With me it was decisive. It licked me." Anna Louise Strong pictured Spain's "green civilian volunteers . . . raked by machine-gunning from the air. . . ." It was a form of attack "against which they were helpless." Similar observations were made by Edwin Rolfe in his history of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, by Erskine Caldwell in his contribution to *Salud!* (a small anthology of writings on Spain), by Waldo Frank, who asked his readers to visualize "tens of thousands of bare breasts of simple men and women . . . there to confront the machine guns and bombing planes. . . ."\*

As this comment of Waldo Frank's suggests, the bombing

\* Frank's vision of an organic society in which values of the earth and the values of the machine are reconciled in a socialist community is set forth in a series of articles in *New Republic*, July of 1938.



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planes were symbolically present in other novels than Hemingway's. The bomber quickly became part of the sound effects, part of the backdrop, for scenes of conflict. Of the best known writers, John Dos Passos uses this image of terror in *The Adventures of a Young Man* and Michael Blankfort uses it in *The Brave and the Blind*. Upton Sinclair brings his *No Pasaran!* to a dime-novel close in which two Americans, cousins who have volunteered for opposing sides, fight it out. The quality of the novel is reflected faithfully in the triumph of the foot-soldier (Loyalist) who "does in" his airborne relative (Fascist).

In addition to the numerous one-act plays which make symbolic use of the airplane, two verse plays for radio, by well-known writers, dramatize the air attack itself. Archibald MacLeish, who had joined Lillian Hellman in raising money for *The Spanish Earth*, wrote *Air Raid*, in which bombers are described by the narrator as a form of dehumanized menace.

They swing like steel in a groove:  
They move like tools not men:  
You'd say there were no men:  
You'd say they had no will but the  
Will of motor on metal.

Implications of this vision become clearer as one recalls the visions of menaced primitivism that are found in MacLeish's earlier poem, *Conquistador*. Lacking this element of overt primitivism but quite as bitterly written, Norman Corwin's play, *They Fly Through the Air With the Greatest of Ease*, was, like dozens of poems and hundreds of editorials, written as a response to the brutal bombing by the Germans of the Basque village of Guernica,\* a bombing which MacLeish denounced (in his speech to the 1937 meeting of the American Writers' Congress) as "the massacre of the civilian population of an undefended Basque village by German planes. . . . The

\* For an astounding list of eminent men and women—from Christian Gauss and Clarence Darrow, Albert Einstein and Carrie Chapman Catt, to Alfred Landon and Harry Emerson Fosdick—see *The Crime of Guernica* (New York, 1937).

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Basques lie kicking in the fields where the machine guns caught up with them, and the Germans fly away."

When, as MacLeish in this speech emphasized, history consisted of horrors such as Guernica, it is not surprising that bombing planes appeared in the poetry of the Spanish war. Muriel Rukeyser has a long poem, "Correspondences," in which "crazies take to the planes" and the reader faces "machineries whose characters are wars." (Returning to America, she told New Yorkers that "The war there . . . is one of humans against guns.") Few poets wrote in her difficult experimental style; Norman Rosten's "Fragments for America" is completely exotic. Nevertheless, his version of the unequal combat between men and machines is disquieting. He writes of a

peasant who tried to stop an enemy plane  
rising; ran cursing into the swift propeller  
to stop it with his hands; the plane rising  
. . . the sun shining on the stained steel. . .

Langston Hughes wrote that "A bombing plane's/The song of Spain," and added further poems to show what he meant, poems like "Air Raid: Barcelona," and "Moonlight in Valencia," in which he links airplanes and death and destroys the traditional connotations of moonlight: "Moonlight in Valencia: the moon meant planes./The planes meant death." Edwin Rolfe, in "A City of Anguish," describes Madrid under bombardment:

All night, all night  
flared in my city the bright  
cruel explosions of bombs.  
All night, all night,  
there, where the soil and stone  
spilled like brains from the sandbag's head,  
the bodiless head lay staring;  
while the anti-aircraft barked,  
barked at the droning plane. . .

Another poet, Boris Todrin, writes in a manner reminiscent of Hemingway's elegy to the American dead and the Spanish earth.

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## *Mechanized Doom*

Worn out fields where bomb and shell  
Scattered iron seeds of hell,  
Grow their scarecrow crops. The torn  
Bones will keep the roots of corn.

John Berryman's more complex poem, "1938," contains bitter comments on the Spanish war and on the war that was still in preparation.

Across the frontiers of the helpless world  
The great planes swarm, the carriers of death,  
Germs in the healthy body of the air,  
And blast our cities where we stand in talk  
By doomed and comfortable fires.

In this helpless world beneath the iron bombers, poets found a metaphor grounded in reality. They found a still more specific metaphor when the "necessities" of modern warfare sanctioned the bombing of cities, for then it became "necessary" that children should die with their elders. Harold Rosenberg's eight-line "Spanish Epitaph" is representative of many poems:

O tall men of Hades  
Have pity on this little one!  
His speech was not formed yet  
All he knew of life was laughing and growing  
Till the iron dropped on him out of the sky.  
O gaunt horses of Hades  
He has not even one weapon  
With which to defend himself.

Muriel Rukeyser's "M-Day's Child" contains this particular theme within the broader theme of mechanical horror.

M-day's child is fair of face,  
Drill-day's child is full of grace,  
Gun-day's child is breastless and blind,  
Shell-day's child is out of its mind,  
Bomb-day's child will always be dumb,  
Cannon-day's child can never quite come,  
but the child born on the Battle-day  
is blithe and bonny and rotted away.

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Aaron Kramer, Charles Norman, and Norman Rosten are three poets, of dozens, who wrote of the bombers and the children.

If bombing planes are almost ubiquitous in the written accounts, they are scarcely less so in the visual arts of the Spanish war. Anton Refregier attempted a surrealist vision of a bomber, a grotesque mixture of fiend and machine, but most American painters followed the lead of Luis Quintanilla, a Spanish painter whose drawings of the war were exhibited and published in America. In his preface to Quintanilla's book, Ernest Hemingway refers to the artist's combat experience in places "where men with rifles, hand grenades, and bundled sticks of dynamite faced tanks, artillery, and planes. . . ." We find the same opposition graphically transformed into peasants fleeing in ox-carts from planes that hover over ruined villages and slaughtered animals. Louis Ribak's *Refugees* can represent scores of American paintings with this theme. In an era when the reading of "stories" into paintings is suspect, it is useful to have Ernest Brace's comment on William Gropper's *Air Raid*:

One senses . . . the terror of implacable blind force, the senseless and indiscriminate destruction of human beings by other human beings too remote, too mechanically indifferent to wonder who or why.

Just as the contrast between men and bombers becomes, in literature, most striking when the child is opposed to the Heinkel or Caproni, so in the iconography of the Spanish war the contrast is most awful when represented in these images. Aldous Huxley, editing a book of drawings by Spanish children, noted the following:

For hundreds of thousands of children in Spain . . . the plane, with its bombs and its machine guns, is the thing that is significant and important above all others. . . . This is the dreadful fact to which the drawings in our collection bear unmistakable witness.

The briefest examination of the pictures themselves is enough to convince us that the children did indeed live in dread of the air raids. In drawing after drawing we see ruined cities, the little figures of fleeing people, and the disproportionately en-

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larged bombing planes. We cannot escape a sense of shame when looking at the drawings or when reading an anecdote recounted by André Malraux in the *Nation* 9 March 1937. The anecdote concerns the distribution of toys to the children of Madrid:

When it was all over, there remained in the immense empty space one little heap, untouched. . . . It was a pile of toy airplanes. It lay there in the deserted bull-ring where any child could have helped himself. The little boys had preferred anything, even dolls, and had kept away from that pile of toy airplanes . . . with a sort of mysterious horror.

Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* is no more pertinent to our theme, no more disturbing a revelation of *la condition humaine* in the twentieth century.

These samples are a token of the pervasiveness, within American interpretations of the Spanish war, of the theme of conflict between men and machines, and of the image of the machine, especially the bombing plane, as the appropriate symbol for the terrible realities of the war. When we turn to the work of two European novelists, Ralph Bates and André Malraux, I believe that we can observe certain differences between the American and the European imagination.\* Ralph Bates' novel, *The Olive Field*, describes the tumult of the years preceding the actual outbreak of war. Agricultural laborers are pitted against effete landowners who collect ancient manuscripts and against ascetic priests who do not understand, as the workers do, that "the olive trees [are] the very spirit of the land." The action reaches a climax in the Left revolution of 1934, where, as Malcolm Cowley noted, the spontaneous action of the *dynamiteros* is overmatched by tanks and planes. When the civil war became international, Bates joined the Republican side and fought through what he later called, in the *Virginia*

\* I believe that my case could be made by discussing British poets—Stephen Spender, W. H. Auden, C. Day Lewis, George Barker, John Cornford—or German novelists—Alfred Kantorowicz, Ludwig Renn, Gustav Regler, Arthur Koestler—but the quality, quantity, availability, and popularity of Bates and Malraux combine so as to make them the best subjects for a short commentary.

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*Quarterly Review*, "the legendary time" in which the hastily organized and badly armed militias fought against machine guns, tanks, and planes. In the preface to a book on Spain, he told of a

docker who had charged through rifle, machine-gun and artillery fire, with a broken plank through which he had hammered nails as his sole weapon. That dock worker was . . . preparing to go to the Aragon front, with an old and defective shot-gun.

In an article published in the *New Republic*, he wrote:

Unarmed men leap on the gunners, wrestle with them, strangle them, drag them to the ground and stab them with knives. Men dive at the machine guns . . . and upset them with their hands.

This report ends with the plea of the Spanish peasant, "Companero Americano, will you sell us rifles? Italian aircraft . . . roar overhead." Of a plowman who sang folk-songs, Bates speculated, "I suppose he is dead now, because he would certainly have tried to defend the Republic with a shotgun against those Caproni and Junkers which nightly raid us." (Compare this with the prayer which Eliot Paul in *The Life and Death of a Spanish Town*, puts into the mouth of a Franco-izing priest: "Our Father, Who art in Heaven, give us our daily round of ammunition, and blunt pitchforks to our enemies.") Bates emphasized this same theme in reviewing John Langdon-Davies' widely-read *Behind the Spanish Barricades*: "The true Spanish tradition is [with] those men who have gone out to battle ill-armed, often literally unarmed, against the destructive machines of international fascism." And, of all writings on the Spanish war, Bates' short stories, collected in *Sirocco and Other Stories*, are closest to Hemingway's in tone and in theme. The protagonists are usually close to the land; their antagonists are associated with mechanized authoritarianism. In "The 43rd Division," published in *Harper's*, Bates' peasant-hero considers the Spanish war and condemns the new modes of warfare:

The mechanical aid to the rebels was violating the nature of the Spaniard. Man to man, valor against valor; that was the Spanish way

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of fighting. Not factory against factory, bald-head engineer against peasant.

The crucial episode of this story embodies the same theme. An izard (a type of chamois) gives birth and a Fascist, equipped with a panoply of technical implements—Luger, Mannlicher-Cacano, Zeis range-finder, Leitz binoculars—kills the animal. Seeing this attack upon the natural order, the peasant-hero resolves his indecisions, vows to accept discipline, and is given command of a guerrilla unit. This story is more successful than Bates' accounts of men in the regular army because, in a sense, the guerrilla unit is a compromise which permits the maintenance of a closeness to nature and, at the same time, the acceptance of a form of discipline. In literature both worlds were possible; outside of literature, Bates had to choose, and he chose the Popular Front of Juan Negrin and Julio Alvarez del Vayo, the discipline, the organization, the technological weapons, and the promise of a socialist Spain in which the machine and the olive tree are harmonized.

Excellent as many of these stories are, André Malraux's *L'Espoir* is the only piece of writing which compares with *For Whom the Bell Tolls* or George Orwell's magnificent *Homage to Catalonia*. No other European novel (of dozens) contains so much of the complexity of the Spanish Civil War. In *L'Espoir*, Hemingway's theme of primitivism—the affirmation of the natural man in the natural landscape—is sounded with a marvelous sense of the ambiguous overtones, and then subordinated to another theme. True to the European revolutionary tradition, Malraux debates and finally decides against the values of a primitive society. As Malcolm Cowley and Joseph Warren Beach separately noted, the struggle of the unarmed mobs against the troops of the Montana Barracks and the fight of the almost unarmed *milicianos* against tanks and armored trains, provide many of the most moving passages of the book, *but* this affirmation of the unorganized activity of the anarchists does *not* persist through the novel. The conflict between man and machine becomes less important as Russian equipment ar-



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rives. Scenes of heroic struggle against a mechanical enemy give way to descriptions of victory won by those who turn from the land in order to fight metal with metal. The somehow humanized "crates" of the circus-like volunteer air-force are replaced by modern flying machines; the pilots learn the necessity of obedience. As Malraux's spokesman argues, "Notre modeste fonction. . . C'est d'organiser L'Apocalypse." Realizing the hopeless situation of the unarmed human being, Malraux, like most writers, finds in this realization a call to action—the *militianos* must be mechanized. Russian *chats* climb into the air over Malraux's Madrid as they did over the Madrid of historical fact. It is true that the theme of discipline and the dramatic victory of the International Brigades at Guadalajara are interwoven with another strand, with the theme of primitivism and the uncoerced action of the peasants who, late in the novel, carry down from the mountains, in ritual procession, the survivors of a wrecked airplane; nevertheless, despite this extraordinarily moving episode, Malraux's *explicit* approval is with the organizers of the Apocalypse, with the Stalinists. (By "Stalinists" I mean those who followed the tactics of Georgi Dimitroff's "Popular Front" and whose ultimate strategy was the socialization and industrialization of a "progressive" Spain.) In taking this position, which F. W. Dupee lamented in the anti-Stalinist *Partisan Review*, Malraux was anticipating historical developments. As the war continued, discipline was imposed upon the militiamen and modern weapons were placed in the hands of the peasants; the *Volunteer for Liberty*, newspaper of the English-speaking battalions of the International Brigades, replaced pictures of "half-armed militiamen," firing from the earth at enemy planes, with pictures and charts of Soviet industrialization, with praise for the rigidly military *Ejército Popular*; James Hawthorne and Louis Fischer, correspondents for *New Masses* and the *Nation*, boasted of the "brand new beauty" of the Loyalists' airplanes, poets wrote elegies for Ben Leider, an American killed while flying in Spanish combat (Rosten wrote: "O Icarus, welcome him, wingless now, and a wanderer"), and even Ralph Bates sounded the

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harsh call to discipline and argued that the "legendary time" was over and had to be replaced by a more "realistic" attitude. In taking this position, however grudgingly, men like Malraux and Bates are, finally, representative of the mainstream of European radicalism, members of a tradition which has, for the most part, rejected the strong element of primitivistic anarchism found in American *and* in Spanish radicalism. Although Karl Marx characterized modern man in industrial society as living in a state of alienation, Marxian socialism argues forwards through the dictatorship of the proletariat to a classless society in which technology is used for the benefit of mankind and not as the instrument of exploitation. Marxism does not look backwards to a vision of primitivistic anarchism.

At the end of his chapter on the pond in winter, Henry Thoreau described the symbolic voyage of the ice cut from Walden Pond.

The pure Walden Water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges. With favoring winds it is wafted past the site of the fabulous islands of Atlantis and the Hesperides, makes the periplus of Hanno, and, floating by Ternate and Tidore and the mouth of the Persian Gulf, melts in the tropic gales of the Indian seas, and is landed in ports of which Alexander only heard the names.

The movement of this passage is towards Asiatic shores, and the flow of metaphors carries us backwards in time. It is, perhaps, an oddity of the history of ideas that the influence of *Walden* was felt in Asia, by primitivistic anarchists like Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy, and far less strongly in industrialized Europe; Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx dreamed not of the past but of the future, and never saw the "pure Walden water" mingle with the waters of the Thames.

### III

Considering this theme of conflict between men and machines, it seems reasonable to suggest that at least part of the extraordinary fascination of the Spanish Civil War and part of the fanatical intensity of feeling among Americans here and in

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Spain, is related to a widespread if barely articulated (or even unarticulated) fear of the implications, and the actualities, of technological society. We can ask two questions: Does this theme of opposition of man and machines represent a fear of machines as such or only the fears of those for whom machines were not yet available, or novel, or in the hands of an enemy? Does this fear have a counterpart in an affirmation of man in a natural, organic relationship to the land, in a tendency towards that stream of primitivism which has run, underground for the most part, through Western civilization since Montaigne's essay on the cannibals? Any answers to these questions are, of course, extremely inconclusive, but the evidence indicates that most men, for one reason or another and despite their fears of a mechanized enemy, were quite willing to equip themselves with modern weapons. When the Spanish war ended and the Second World War began, most of those who condemned the *Luftwaffe* became enthusiastic over the R.A.F. and, eventually, the United States Air Force. Hiroshima caused less of a stir than Guernica.

However, to say that most men are not primitivists is not to say that they are untouched by the values of primitivism, by a desire for the spontaneity and the freedom from repression which we associate with an organic relationship to the natural landscape. What Ernest Hemingway has done in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* has been to orchestrate and make central a theme which runs through scores of other writers and artists. He has, to change the figure, turned the various images of value into the characters of a drama, his version of the Spanish tragedy. Although the greatest caution must be exercised, we can surely study Hemingway's ordering of the historical events and speculate whether there is not within a vast complex of other and often contradictory values an association of freedom with the earth, of tyranny with machines; on the one hand, fertility and spontaneity, and on the other, sterility and repression. The spectre of an urbanized, industrialized, mechanized and regimented world, a spectre that has haunted the romantic imagination since Blake's dark

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Satanic mills and Melville's Tartarus of Maids, seemed—to Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, Waldo Frank, Archibald MacLeish, a few men like them—to have materialized, to have become the bombing planes over Madrid and Barcelona. Perhaps this is but, to use Ernest Cassirer's term, the symbol-maker's way of saying that capitalism was, in some countries, becoming Fascism. The problem is that the Marxists' vision of a Spain dotted with Magnitogorsks and Pittsburghs does not easily harmonize with the primitivists' vision of the Spain of Don Quixote and Sancho Panzo, wherein, in John Dos Passos' phrase, we could find Rosinante on the road again.

Looking back at the Spanish war, we see now that Hemingway's primitivistic Spain was doomed the minute that the British Foreign Office warned Léon Blum that his aiding the Spanish Republic meant the end of the Franco-British alliance. Faced by the mechanized armies of Germany and Italy, the Loyalists had either to secure modern weapons and a unified command, or go down in defeat. The failure of the Spanish Republic in that effort to arm itself and to achieve political unity meant the coming of a Spanish version of Fascism; *and*, had the Loyalists succeeded in their efforts, the Spanish peasants would have been forced in the process to accept limitations on their famous individualism (their "*personalismo*"), to adopt the mechanized weapons of modern war, to surrender their archaic relationship with the hard, dry, Spanish earth, to become members of technologically-based mass-society that might or might not have resulted eventually in the Marxist utopia. In either case, the result would have been a curtailment of freedom and an increase of repression. In other words, there was in Spain as in nineteenth-century America the dilemma and the paradox of primitivism and progress which Henry Nash Smith has studied in *Virgin Land*; just as the dream of America as a new Garden of Eden contradicted the dream of America as an industrialized titan, so the attempt to discipline the Spanish and to raise them from their "feudal" past (represented historically and poetically by landlord, bishop, general) contradicted the desire to

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preserve a spontaneous, organic, archaic relationship of man and nature.

Joy Davidman, in her *Letter to a Comrade*, wrote bravely about the unarmed Loyalists,

We have only the bodies of men to put together,  
the wincing flesh, the peeled white forking stick,  
easily broken, easily made sick,  
frightened of pain and spoiled by evil weather;  
we have only the most brittle of all things the man  
and the heart the most iron admirable thing of all,  
and putting these together we make a wall,

but Hemingway's interpretation seems closer to the historical truth when Robert Jordan is left, crippled and alone, waiting for the newest conquerors. Perhaps the novel is closer to historical fact only because *The Spanish Earth* failed to move us enough, because there were too many Stanley Baldwins and Cordell Hulls and too few Anselmos and Robert Jordans, because the western democracies abandoned Spain to a choice between two forms of totalitarianism. Confronted by the mechanized enemy, Hemingway's primitivism becomes an impossible vision, but that is *not* to say that the values associated with primitivism are not still valid ones; one need not be a primitivist to feel that technological society today is both repressive and frighteningly unstable. Perhaps we can thank the "practical men" of the 1930s that, in an era of ballistic missiles and atomic warheads, we are all as helpless as the children beneath the bombing planes.

At any rate, the extraordinary thing about the Spanish war is that the historical facts seemed almost of themselves to dramatize the conflicts of our time; the material facts did, as in nineteenth-century America, correspond to the spiritual facts, or, to continue in Emerson's language, the situation was such that the poet could attach the word to the thing. Within the labyrinth of events which historians have agreed to call the Spanish Civil War, there was once again, on foreign soil, as so often before in our literature, that opposition of "the two

## *Mechanized Doom*

kingdoms of force" which Leo Marx, writing in the *Massachusetts Review*, sees as central to our experience:

For the contrast between the two cardinal images of value, the machine and the native landscape, dramatizes the great issue of our culture. It is the germ, as Henry James put it, of the most final of all questions about America.

In other words, Hemingway's vision of the Spanish war has its roots in a very *American* tradition of thought and feeling. The Spanish war was, among other things, a fight against the desecration of that relationship between man and nature which Natty Bumppo sought in forest and prairie, which Henry Thoreau found while floating quietly on Walden Pond, which Herman Melville pursued in his quest for an "authentic Eden in a pagan sea," which Walt Whitman saw in a blade of summer grass, which Huck and Jim discovered while drifting down the Mississippi on a raft, which William Faulkner finds in the mule-powered and horse-swapping South, which John Dos Passos envisioned when he wrote that the "villages are the heart of Spain," which Ernest Hemingway located in upper Michigan and in an African Spain. We found in the Spanish war a mirror which reflected the image of our own unquiet desperation.

## *Richard F. Hugo*

### THE WAY A GHOST BEHAVES

Knock or none, that woman hears a knocking  
Runs to the door, ready for a friend—  
Only frost in moonlight and the dog  
She cannot stand.

She believes that God is in the trees  
Perched like a bird, waiting for the crumbs  
She scatters on  
The snow for definite robins.

Love to her is mystery and pain.  
Her children died  
And winter puts a creaking in the house  
That makes her sing and grin.

Her garden works  
Because, early on the first warm day  
While others wait the official end of winter  
Her hoe is ringing rocks away.

Deaf or not, that woman hears me knocking  
Runs to the door, ready for a friend—  
Only rain and darkness and a man  
She'd love again.



## A CHAPEL FURTHER WEST THAN MOST

Sung badly hymns are loaded with remorse  
Singers on the cross  
Their music pealed the paper from the walls  
I hear that dissonance in waves today  
The ocean thick with commerce and debris

She was way off key that girl of farms  
Old from hoeing stone  
And farming soil the worms and crows ignore  
She sang loud enough to be alone  
Hitting notes that only dogfish hear

That book was black and white with Luther's grief  
*Sola* on the leaf  
The ocean protestant with tide  
And elegance abandoned in the foam  
Four hundred years of idols with no blood

Now the church is rich  
I still hear those twenty-odd bad voices  
Though hired voices clean the sea with tones  
Walls are varnished teakwood and the windows  
Have been stained by far off artisans

## NORTHWEST RETROSPECTIVE: MARK TOBEY

What life is better—stone and stone—  
Freaks are honored in the east with shrines,  
Even marked and worshipped, even painted  
If some color amplifies the strange.  
In the market men are selling color  
Cheap as fruit. On canvas what faint  
Line extending, splits and lives,  
Returns and multiplies, and never ending  
Stiffens like a fighter's wrist, becomes  
A net and traps our eyes with salmon,  
Or is silk and floating, or is quiet  
Like a map. What drums are driving  
Migratory ants through charming lakes.  
And if beholders weep, what painter  
Needs their tears to mix tomorrow's oils.

That's where harmony was contraband,  
And later where the loot was owned  
And later where the cirrus circled  
Mars and left white trails of pain  
That hung for centuries. (A line  
Of poetry is not a painter's line  
And in museums flight is not allowed.)

Beyond Van Allen rings, the stars  
Don't glitter, arrogant as moons.  
When did we start? Light years ago.  
Why did we come? No matter. We  
Are not returning to that world  
Of ditch and strain, the research terms:  
Cryogenic fuels, free radicals,  
Plasma jets, coordinated fusion.  
Only the last, in all this void, applies.  
A universe is fusing in our eyes.

Why return to air and land, when  
Free from weight and the weight  
Of hope, we float toward that blue  
That kisses man forever out of form.  
Forget the earth, those images and lies.  
They said there'd be no wind out here  
But something blows from star to star  
To clean our eyes and touch our hair.

### HOLY FAMILY

Here, the nuns are rumored cruel. Beat  
In the name of Jesus. Scratch the voices  
Of the choir with those poison thorns.  
The Dugans know theatrics clip at least  
Four inches from the ruler's stroke. Wince  
And clown and say yes ma'am enough,  
Hail a hundred Marys and you're safe.

Money buys a secondary Christ. Blood  
And pain, the best. Rap me, Sister,  
I have violated eels. All you kids  
Be kind to mother, do as daddy grunts.  
You should be thankful for this day-old bread  
And for the birds and trees. All the saints  
Who died for us take beads on what we say.

Hey, there's Jesus coming down the road.  
Look, no whip. No terrifying word.  
I swear it, Sister, swear—He's dancing  
In the dust with Dugan's worst, and dressed  
In corduroy and silk. When visions break  
What remains in summer—melted nuns,  
A clown not quite eternal in the heat.

## THE WAY A GHOST DISSOLVES

Where she lived the close remained the best.  
The nearest music and the static cloud,  
Sun and dirt were all she understood.  
She planted corn and left the rest  
To elements, convinced that God  
With giant faucets regulates the rain  
And saves the crops from frost or foreign wind.

Fate assisted her with special cures.  
Rub a half potato on your wart  
And wrap it in a damp cloth. Close  
Your eyes and whirl three times and throw.  
Then bury rag and spud exactly where  
They fall. The only warts I have now  
Are memories or comic on my nose.

Up at dawn. The earth provided food  
If worked and watered, planted green  
With rye grass every fall. Or driven wild  
By snakes that kept the carrots clean,  
She butchered snakes and carrots with a hoe.  
Her screams were sea birds in the wind,  
Her chopping—nothing like it now.

I will garden on the double run,  
My rhythm obvious in ringing rakes,  
And trust in fate to keep me poor and kind  
And work until my heart is short  
Then go out slowly with a feeble grin,  
My fingers flexing but my eyes gone grey  
From cramps and the lack of oxygen.

Forget the tone. Call the neighbor's trumpet  
Golden as it grates. Exalt the weeds.  
Say the local animals have class  
Or help me say that ghost has gone to seed.  
And why attempt to see the cloud again  
The screaming face it was before it cracked  
In wind from Asia and a wanton rain.

## The Dumb-waiter

**A**AAH, TAKE yer eyes off me," said Mrs. Meehan to the door in the green kitchen wall. The door was small, set high above a square of rotten paneling and the unused but still exposed gaslight jet. Behind the door was the dumb-waiter shaft. If Mrs. Meehan opened it, she knew she'd get that cold smell of tomcats and garbage in her face; and if she leaned out into the shaft, lit only by a muzzy skylight five floors up, she'd look down along the pulley-rope one flight into the cellar, and see the dumb-waiter sitting there at the bottom, waiting for her.

Mrs. Meehan looked at the clock: it was five-thirty, almost time. She turned a broad back to the dumb-waiter shaft, grabbed a dishrag, and glared around the shelves for something to do—a grease spot to wipe or a roach to kill. But the kitchen was clean. There was only one more job before supper.

But still she stood in the middle of the kitchen, holding the dishrag, while the clock edged past five-thirty. "Got to get to it," she muttered, feeling duty prod her like a broomstick between the shoulders. "They'll be complainin' upstairs in a minute, with me not takin' their garbage on time." Still she balked, wringing the dry rag till the tenants upstairs did start complaining: in the ten kitchens above Mrs. Meehan's, housewives started banging the pipes because the dumb-waiter was late. The super's kitchen rang with noise, from the tapping echo of the fifth-floor pipes to the baritone gonging just upstairs. Rattled as usual, Mrs. Meehan grabbed her own garbage bag from under the sink and ran for the cellar door. "Okay, okay," she said to the pipes as she went. "Keep yer pants on up

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there. Garbage collector comin'," she said as she jounced the bag to the crook of her arm and unlatched the cellar door.

Mrs. Meehan was strong and tall, big in the shoulders and bigger in the hips, strong enough surely to do her work: to sweep the sidewalk and stoop, to wash the hall windows, to collect the garbage every night. Mr. Meehan did the rough superintendent work, hauling the full garbage cans out of the cellar in the mornings, dragging them up the steps to the street, and rattling them round to the garbage truck at the curb. Surely Mrs. Meehan was strong enough to do her work; and she did feel strong all day, after Mr. Meehan left for his job—they lived rent free but got no pay—strong, from the mornings when she scrubbed the stoop and heard the garbage trucks whirring at the curb; through the noons when she mopped the halls and saw the sun dart through the clothesline and bare-tree net of the alley to make a bright crack on her kitchen floor—"I'm way down," Mrs. Meehan had said in awe once, peering up the alley to the sky. "I'm right at the bottom, down here."

She even felt strong through the afternoons, when the tenants above started nagging the pipes for heat. She liked to lift the heavy shovel and swing the coal into the furnace. But at five-thirty, when the winter day blackened and it was time to send up the dumb-waiter for the day's garbage, then her legs started aching behind the knee: because her insides hated the job. "I been garbage man enough," she pleaded now, standing before the cellar door. But it was no use; so she bunted the door open with her hip and stood at the top of the stairs.

She leaned forward into the black and the cold garbage smell, waving for the light-cord while Skippy, the fox terrier who lived in the cellar and caught rats, yapped up the stairs and bounced at her knee. The bulb swung from a chain as it lit the stair-well, the mustard-yellow walls streaked with dirt, the steep wooden stairs, and the dog.

"Yeah, yeah, Skippy," said Mrs. Meehan. "Get on down there, you first—," for the bulb lit only the stairs, and the cellar below was dark. Mrs. Meehan peered from the top of the

## *The Dumb-waiter*

stairs, gritting her teeth and squinting for rats. Skippy tapped down into the dark. His eyes seemed pale and wide, like the eyes of deep-sea swimmers in the dark; once he'd been black and white, but seven years rat-catching in the cellar, sleeping in the coalbin, had greyed him all over.

"It ain't fair, not lettin' the creature see the light of day," Mrs. Meehan had objected long ago, when they had first become supers, with the tenement cellar to care for.

"Yeah, well, when *you* start catchin' rats, *he* can live in the kitchen," Mr. Meehan had said. "Stinkin' rats, they'll eat the house down, without I get a dog to kill 'em. And a dog won't quit a dirty job—too damn stupid. You won't find a cat, or anythin' smart, stayin' on the job down there in the dark."

Mrs. Meehan never contradicted her husband, and besides she hated rats with all the horror of a big animal for a small sudden one. So Skippy lived in the dark, and Mrs. Meehan collected the garbage, and worked the dumb-waiter every day with the rat-catching dog for company.

Leaving the door wide open for retreat behind her, she followed him down into the dark, waved in a panic for the light-cord, and lit the cellar. A yellow circle of light dimmed to dark, crooked-brick corners. Mrs. Meehan might have been in the crack of a mine shaft, for all she could see of walls. There were humps of furniture, dusty chair legs, a spray of bicycle wheels, and a pulse of heat from the furnace room. Coal lay banked and dirty all around. The dog snuffled into the dark after rats, and Mrs. Meehan clutched the bag: "Oh Jesus Christ, oh Skippy you little bastard, don't you stir any up!"

At the back, in the dim light, stood the empty row of garbage cans; and behind them, set in a brick wall, was the dumb-waiter shaft. Mrs. Meehan dropped her bag into the nearest can, stumped over to the shaft door, and yanked it open. She turned her head as double dark and cold flowed out, but the smell was all around her; so she breathed in the rotten musty air and fumbled for the rope. The dumb-waiter sat there at the bottom of the shaft, a two-storied box of heavy



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wood, five feet high, clotted with dirt where the rope attached. Mrs. Meehan caught the rope and leaned out to see if the dumb-waiter was clear; people dropped garbage sometimes into the shaft and tripped up the car. She saw the shaft funneling up, dark, nicked by chinks of light from kitchens above. She stared up towards the vague skylight.

"I'm right at the bottom," she marveled. "This is way down"; but the cold wind stung her eyes and she looked away. Her right hand reached high on the pulley-rope while her left felt for a row of buttons on the wall; she hauled the rope, the pulley rumbled through the shaft, the dumb-waiter lurched up, and the signal-buzzers rang in the fifth-floor apartments. Soot fell and hit Mrs. Meehan's arm as she swung on the rope, but she had no time to brush it away.

A ray of light shot down as the fifth-floor people opened their doors, and the rope jerked in Mrs. Meehan's hand as they piled on their garbage. "Okay up here, super," called a woman with a Spanish voice, and Mrs. Meehan slacked the rope, feeling an extra pull. "That little Mrs. Torres, she got a nice apartment," said Mrs. Meehan. "She gets the sun all day, up there."

The fourth, the third, the second-floor buzzers rang. The weight began to pull on Mrs. Meehan's arms, but she was strong enough to hold it. She tried to keep back from the shaft, but as usual when the car hit the second-floor ledges it rocked, and as usual garbage fell out. A broken mess of eggshells dropped down in the dark and hit Mrs. Meehan on the arm. She looked at the slimy drip and wiped her arm on her dress-front, unable to let go of the rope.

"Okay on the first floor, super," called a voice from above the heavy car.

"Nothin' super down here," muttered Mrs. Meehan and then grinned slowly. "Hey, Skippy," she called to the dog, who was rattling around the garbage cans. "Hear that? I may be a super, but there ain't nothin' super!"

She laughed. The dumb-waiter strained against her back and arms, but she held it easily, letting it down till it settled on the bottom of the shaft. Then she began to unload it.

## *The Dumb-waiter*

"Here's Mrs. Torres' bag," she saw. "I smell banana peels, and she came in today with bananas. For the kids. She got too many kids—."

Not thinking, she walked towards the garbage cans in the half-dark. She raised the bag over the can, poised to drop it in, when suddenly there was a turning of grey-brown fur in the can; claws scratched against the tin; eyes sparkled in the dark; and Mrs. Meehan half dropped, half threw the bag on the floor and shuddered back as a rat the size of Skippy whisked out and scabbled away. As if the sudden dart had been a signal, the cellar began to whisper with the bustle and squeak of rats as Skippy took off, ears flat, between the cans. Mrs. Meehan stood clutching her shoulders for a minute; then as the dog's barking turned to a wet snarling, she squatted down and began sweeping the garbage with her hands into the torn paper bag.

"God-damn coffee grounds rot the bag," she mumbled, slumping to her knees and reaching for a banana peel. She closed her fist over the peel and slowly shook her head: "I ain't gonna do this again," she said. "Hear? I ain't never gonna do this again!"

"—Al," said Mrs. Meehan the next morning. Big-hipped in the pale sun, she was sweeping off the stoop. She worked without shivering in a housedress and sweater, for she never felt much cold. "Al," she said again, with a certain meaning in her voice.

"Yeah?" grunted Mr. Meehan, hoisting the garbage cans up the steps. Forty years ago curly-haired Al had looked like an altar boy. Now he looked like a superintendent. "Well, what?" he asked when she didn't speak.

"Al, I met Mrs. Torres when she was leavin' this morning," said Mrs. Meehan, but as she spoke the garbage truck turned the corner from Amsterdam Avenue, windows flashing yellow in the early sun, and its clanking covered her voice.

"Can't ya talk?" snarled Al.

"Al," bellowed Mrs. Meehan, "we could move up there, when Mrs. Torres moves out, if we wanted to."

"Move up there?" he said, not interested, more to the gar-

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bage can than to her. "Them spics with a hundred kids been tearin' down the walls."

"It ain't so bad, Al," said Mrs. Meehan. She'd seen the apartment once, when Mrs. Torres wanted her walls washed. It was the same as hers: the paneling was rotten and the gaslight jets were exposed; but from the back window she'd looked over tar-roofs and clotheslines; she'd seen pigeons flap below the window sills, heard them chuckle and coo in their nests under the eaves; and she'd seen the sun clean the rooms better than she could, all morning. She remembered feeling lumpy and rough in all that sun. "It gets the sun," she said.

"Ah, hell," said Al to the garbage can. "You gettin' tired a livin' rent free?"

"Al," said Mrs. Meehan, as close to crying as she'd come in forty years, "oh, Al, it's only \$51.75!"

He straightened up and looked directly at her for the first time. Anyone else who knew her would have been appalled, hearing her voice. "Huh?" he said.

She had no words. She moved her shoulders, looked at her broom, at her hands, at the garbage truck. "There was a rat in the can last night," she said, giving up.

"Oh, hell." Mr. Meehan slapped down the can and turned to the cellar steps, rubbing his cold hands. "Wait'll they sit around you in a circle, beggin' like dogs. I seen that. Or hide behind corners and jump for what you got in your hands. I seen that too. Rats, lady, I seen nothin' but rats. Rats'll be sittin' playin' potsy at my own wake. Hell," he finished, going down the stairs. "Hell, I thought you was serious."

Mrs. Meehan was left with the broom in her hands. At first she swept hard, bending the broom-straws and shooting dirt off the stoop: she saw the sun up on the top floor—you could grow a plant. She remembered a funny meowing bird Mrs. Torres said was a sea gull. A sea gull! And I said I wouldn't collect again. Never again. A passion rose in her as strong as herself, taking her over entirely; but it smoothed away in the rhythm of sweeping, leaving her sweaty and scared. By the time the garbage truck had moved whining in front of the house she

## *The Dumb-waiter*

was sweeping gently, and the passion was almost covered up.

At five-thirty that evening Mrs. Meehan, a bag of garbage on her hip, went dumbly down into the cellar. Skippy had a cut across his nose, but the half-light, the cold smell, and the empty garbage cans were the same.

"Skippy," she said, standing way back from the nearest can, holding out the bag with stiff arms, and dropping it in, "Skippy, you could come up there with me, maybe, if we moved. Nah," she shut herself up. "Stop. Stop thinkin'. We're stayin' down here, and that's all."

She opened the door, reached for the pulley-rope, and buzzed the fifth-floor apartments. The dumb-waiter rumbled up, doors rattled and slammed, and the weight began to drag on Mrs. Meehan's arms.

"Okay up here, super," called Mrs. Torres.

"You got it good, lady, with all your kids," said Mrs. Meehan. "You get your garbage taken."

The dumb-waiter was loaded and rocking with garbage by the time it reached the third floor. Mrs. Meehan felt it jolting down the rope. A thought flickered through her head: something oughta happen to this thing—then it was gone, and she wondered why there was sweat on her hands and neck. It was cold in the cellar, but the pulley-rope slipped in her hands. As the car passed the third-floor ledges, she felt a corner tip; a slop of tomatoes dropped down the shaft and splattered on her hand. Mrs. Meehan stopped the pulley and stood, hand on the heavy rope, staring at her fingers: that's gonna dry sticky, she thought, if I don't wipe it. Then suddenly the passion that had caught her in the morning jumped on her again, and loosened her hand for a second. Exulting and panicky, she fought to stop the slipping pulley; but then: "Oh, hell," said Mrs. Meehan from the bottom of her heart, and let go of the rope.

The dumb-waiter started to fall, crashing from side to side of the shaft, spilling garbage and blasting open doors. The sliding roar echoed and doubled through the rat-tunneled, hollowed old walls of the house. Skippy froze, eyes big and ears stiff, as if the biggest rat in the world were coming; Mrs. Mee-

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han froze in terror, looking for the stranger who had dropped the rope.

Then the dumb-waiter hit and exploded at the bottom of the shaft. There was a wild spray of garbage, of planks and bricks and splinters, of clotted filth from the shaft bottom; there was the cracking of wood and the clang of a wounded garbage can. Skippy burst yapping out of the cellar into the hall light. Doors slammed, tenants ran and jabbered down the stairs. Some ran for the cellar; some, feeling the trembling house, made for the street. And then there was only a settling sound down in the cellar, a patter of plaster and a tinkle of glass—the skylight had been smashed by the rope. And there was the sound of Mrs. Meehan crying.

The tenants who rushed down into the cellar found Mrs. Meehan bruised but standing up in a ruin of garbage. The rotten brick wall of the shaft had fallen out, spilling a hairy pile of bricks across the floor. Shards of dumb-waiter quivered side by side with banana peels as far back as the furnace room, and the whole cellar began to breathe with falling plaster. And then down into the cold smell of the shaft trickled air from the broken skylight.

## *Louis Ginsberg*

### REFUGEES

The ruins in their hearts  
Rehearse the rubble places;  
Our disordered times are  
Recited by their faces.

The evils of our era  
Are scrawled upon their features.  
What can scrub our History  
From these ravaged creatures?

### BRIDAL SONG

Amid a host of metaphors,  
The rabbi made a sign.  
We sipped the glass but thought that soon  
We'd drink a better wine.

Congratulations rang their bells;  
And ringed by all the sound,  
We saw our secret yearnings gaze  
From eyes of all around.

The taxi floated to our dream:  
We smiled, for we could tell  
It could not hide behind the ruse  
Of some lit-up hotel.

The elevator rose to Heaven—  
And all our radiance shone,  
As we took off disguises of  
Our different flesh and bone.

## *John Holmes*

### TRUTH ABOUT PICTURES

Looking at pictures is for one reason only,  
To catch someone moving, or some change.  
To go into the picture, and be its size.  
In photographs of my own earlier life  
Everyone starts talking again, goes away,  
My brother and I back to the bicycle  
Upside-down on the back walk, to finish  
Fixing the coaster-brake, squatting seriously  
Down, thirty-five years ago. But I get up  
And come back, nearer and coming nearer,  
Saying, "What will become of me after this?"  
Not those words, not so much saying we,  
What have we done by this time, or you to me,  
As a boy's look, a breath before he asks.  
The truth about pictures is that people  
In pictures do not hear what you answer.  
I tell him. I begin telling. I know.  
He almost hears. And goes back. My brother  
And I work on the brake till supertime.



## *James O. Long*

### Prologue

THEY HAD LEFT the grim-faced body that swung from the tree hanging there long enough for the newspaper to get a picture of Sheriff Turner and his two deputies and Constable Twigg standing there beside it with shotguns and pistols. And when it finally did come out in the Jackson paper, the Negro who had been hanged by the neck, had somehow twisted or been twisted by the mysterious forces that twist things, hung, so that not the Negro but only his anonymous behind was presented to the camera; the whole thing cropped just above the waist anyway, which was, after all, in good taste, and the armed men looking competent and dangerous and running about a step and a half behind events, and not much more useful or concerned than if they had been guarding a spoiled side of beef from the unlikely event that someone would want to steal it. And Twigg was grinning a toothy, frozen grin that his mother had taught him to grin whenever a camera was pointed at him.

Nobody had known how to tie a hangman's noose, so they just settled for a square knot and slipped it around his head and yanked him off the ground. This just went to prove that the reason they tie a man's hands and feet behind him when they hang him is not to keep from getting loose, but to keep him from making a fool of himself.

And so they had seen him kick, those shadowy faces strewn on both sides of the road, and they had watched him make an undignified fool of himself, spitting, gagging: arms and legs going all together and his body whipping like a snake with its head mashed, not really trying to get loose, but actually trying to run, his feet up about shoulder-high off the ground,

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trying to run, and the nigger boy they brought down to teach a lesson, watching his daddy hang, just lying there on the ground laughing and rolling his eyes and people hitting him with long willow switches like it was him and not his daddy that the white girl said raped her.

And somebody with a long willow switch came running up in the light of the fire they had built up under him to see him better, and let him have it across the shanks a time or two like flicking a mare with a buggy whip, and two or three voices shrieking and laughing and calling, one of them: "At's it, Will, make the black son-of-a-bitch go!"

And then when everybody was afraid he was really going to die, they had let loose of the rope and he fell down on the road and didn't have any better sense than to move, and so they got him up on his feet and whipped him with long willow switches some more until he fell down on his knees and didn't even make a sound, not even when the switches, lashing down like coachwhips, cut open the flesh about his neck. "Hell, he ain't got no feelins," one hollered. "Look here," and he cut down again with the willow limb. "Like a damn mule," one of them said. "Stand up!" they hollered. "Talk!" They got him on his feet but he didn't fall because too many pressed around him, and his eyes were rolled up at the sky. The sky was August; it was not black or blue, but aquamarine with a moon ambitionless as a whippoorwill singing its monotonous, senseless song.

Where they had piled sticks and cardboard they had a fire going and every now and then somebody would hit it with a stick and scatter it and there would be shouts and laughter and shrieks. And so when the second time they hoisted him up, and he didn't make quite as big a fool of himself as he did the first time, some boys drug some burning sticks out of the fire, flinging it a little of the way at a time and kicking it until it burned under him. "Hey," somebody hollered, "We don't want no cruelty here. Git that fire from under 'im." But somebody had found a great big pasteboard box and they threw it on there, and presently it blazed up. And there was some

## *Prologue*

tar-paper and somebody threw some paint at the fire but it went all the way across and splattered some people on the other side. The paint was bright orange, and bathed in the fire-light it glistened like blood on their clothes and hair. One of them hollered, "Blood!" and the others laughed. The tar-paper had smoked for a while, and then it caught up in a thick curl of red. His trouserleg blazed and he kicked one short undignified kick and his arms went straight out like he was trying to reach up for the moon. There he hung, flaming like fury with his dark face streaming with all the waters of his life, with the pigment of his skin until slowly his eyes glowing white with the pain inside them, fixed straight ahead as those mysterious forces that turn things that hang from ropes turned him, and his gaze looked down upon them all.

When he had blazed, there had been shrieking and shouting, but now, the flames had died down into a flickering light, and the tumult subsided into calm. Again and again the specter twisted on pendulum, a gentle breeze rocking him to and fro, and around and around. One of those with the "blood" on him wiped at his hair.

Uneasily, almost imperceptibly, they had drawn back from the fire. And the specter had seemed to move. One of the boys hollered, trying to scare everybody, but his single, everlasting shout died in its own echoes; and there was a hiss that grew louder and louder and they murmured when the specter's chest grew bigger and bigger, and his lips had curled back exposing white teeth against the dark hollow of his jaws, a sound like a moan escaped out of him. Some ran home, then and there, not knowing that the heat had merely built up gases inside him that were now finding their escape.

And so, one by one they retreated into the August night. And one by one, the lights went out in the valley, and three moons hung over Turnbo that night: the pale-brass moon in the sky, and the two gleaming, prophetic moons reflected in the eyes of the man who swung to and fro, turned by the mysterious forces that turn things that hang by strings and ropes.

# *Manuel José Othón*

(Mexican, 1858-1906)

## THE SHOT

A gun report shatters the prairie's peace  
At night, and I start from sleep, listening,  
Racked with mortal doubt, while the dim distance  
Betrays neither profanation nor surprise.

Was it a bullet, rapid and final  
In its course, that stopped a man's existence?  
Has a mountain dweller, after intense  
Struggle, put down some savage animal?

That dreadful sound, long reverberating  
In the mind, has unstrung me. I am made aware  
Of all those intimate clues we are denied,

For whether to wreck or save a living thing  
The selfsame sound is produced by wayfarer  
And cattle guard, assassin and suicide.

Translated by Francis Golffing

## *Mexican Anonymous*

(sixteenth century)

### SONNET

There voyaged across the salt sea from Spain  
To our Mexican shores some uncouth gent,  
Broken in health, sponsored by no patron,  
And in his pockets never a red cent.

Things started to improve. When he looked good  
Fools like himself came forth to crown the tyke  
With laurels such as bygone ages would  
Think fit for Caesar, Virgil and the like.

Now he who once hawked pins about the streets  
Is a man of quality, his title Count,  
His total assets matching those of Fugger,  
And has nothing but scorn for the old haunt  
Where he made friends and satisfied his needs  
Casting his drag net daily in Sanlúcar.

Translated by Francis Golffing

## in review

### JOHN WAIN AND JOHN BARTH: THE ANGRY AND THE ACCURATE

George Bluestone

LAST YEAR, at the University of Washington, John Wain, wearing the profound eyebags of success, praised Chekhov for his "reverent openness before experience," performed brilliantly as English wit and literary lion. Before he left, he had assured the local paper that he was not really angry. "Of course, I had to endure the name for the sake of publicity." At the same time, echoing his own praise of the queen from his essay in *Declaration*, he found little or nothing to rebel against. After all, England was peopled with "rosy-cheeked, healthy youngsters," a perfect tribute to socialized medicine. It was a deliberate baiting of the "Angry Young Men" myth that has grown up around Mr. Wain and his confrères. Why not? The publicity had been fantastic, the lecture circuits opened, the market pulse quickened. Even the sodden subject in Dylan Thomas' spoof on the travelling poet was never so well received. Tynan was writing for *The New Yorker*, Amis for *Esquire*, Braine and Osborne were being filmed, and Mr. Wain himself was on tour. All were skating along, enjoying the easy glissades of public approval. If the warm play of pastel lights had thawed the anger, who could blame them? What was there, after all, to complain about?

This may seem ungracious, too much like dragging in outside evidence to judge the autonomous work. In this case, however, Mr. Wain's ripostes are curiously germane to his fiction. Outside and in, he is a deeply conflicted young man. Like his face, Mr. Wain's work shows energy and wear, a broil of lines and light. His conflicts bristle with implications which test our assumptions about what we expect from contemporary fiction. Precisely because critical opinion has not yet jelled around them, John Wain and John Barth, two new faces, voices, in British and American fiction, are apt subjects for fresh appraisal.

What have they been saying? To begin with John Wain, we find that his fourth and latest novel, *A Travelling Woman* (title borrowed from Bessie Smith), repeats the pattern of his earlier fiction: an ingen-

## John Wain and John Barth

ious idea, messaged until the blood begins to course, a fumbling but engaging hero, a villain we can safely disapprove. The evils? Class lines, provincial hypocrisy, an insulated school system, Midland grubbiness, the conventional perils of success. The hope? A rather righteous hero who tilts comically at Midland windmills. Mr. Wain is a prolific writer; he has given us four novels to date from which we can rough out a pattern. In *Born in Captivity*, we have Charlie Lumley defying the ratty expectations of Edith and Robert Tharkles, of Hutchins and June Veeber, actively rebelling by assuming a variety of *personae*—window-washer, dope runner, hospital attendant, chauffeur, bouncer, gag-writer. In *Living in the Present*, we have Edgar Banks resolving to commit suicide and to take one despicable soul with him. The villain in this case is Rollo Philipson-Smith, a sort of simian T. S. Eliot who uses poetry for social climbing, organizes a neo-royalist Movement supposedly aimed at a return to "traditional values," which is really nothing more than a mean-spirited excuse for petty snobbery. In *The Contenders*, we have Joe Shaw, a Midland journalist recounting the history of Robert Lamb and Ned Roper, the two central antagonists locked in a deadly struggle for success. Lamb makes it as an artist, Roper as a businessman—the popularizer of Blue Seal Ware, a clever line of middling crockery. The idea: both are finally diabolical, dehumanized by success, for each in his own way subverts humans to inhuman ends.

The women in these novels are consistently wish fulfillment, erotic dreams-made-flesh. Charlie has his Veronica, Edgar his Catherine, Ned and Robert their Myra, Joe Shaw his Pepina. In each case, the satirical edge is blunted by compromise. Charlie ends as a gag writer for Terence Frush, a sort of aerial Henry Ford who rolls out one-minute radio fillers like stamped dies. Edgar returns to work for Simms, the brackish schoolmaster who was at least partly responsible for Edgar's death wish in the first place. Joe takes Pepina back to that "town I cannot name," where he will ply his honest trade, having disowned the destructive contenders. We are meant to take the hero's compromise as "mature," as a fragile declaration of humanity. But instead we leave the hero huddled behind the shield of his integrity, newly armed against the spears of temptation. In the hero's final posture there is always something unconvincing.

Clearly there is much here to admire: Mr. Wain's wit, his sharpness of observation, his inventiveness: "His face began to lose its outlines like a pat of butter on a heated plate"; "Inside my fat body my shrunken skeleton rattled like a folded-up tripod in a suitcase." At times,



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Mr. Wain's scenes carom crazily into high comedy. We remember Walter Braceweight, son of the chocolate millionaire in *Born in Captivity*, smashing the Daimler while Lumley stands aghast; the practical joke of the "merde" telegrams; Edgar Banks botching another murder on a *télésiège* in the Alps; Ned Roper's calculated staging of his own wedding to Myra Chetwynd to make Robert's wedding seem like a rehearsal.

*A Travelling Woman*, unfortunately, is a falling off from even this level of competence. Again, the idea is intriguing. George Links, a provincial solicitor, is advised by his wife Janet to undergo psychoanalysis as an antidote to chronic boredom. On the pretense of taking her advice, he finds solace not on a medical couch, but in Ruth Cowley's bed. Ruth is married to Edward Cowley, a kind of British Norman Vincent Peale turned agnostic, author of the best-selling *Discovery of Faith*. The trouble is that Edward's crisis of faith is finally more interesting than George's bed-hopping. To complete the Restoration switch, Janet Links ends up in bed with one Fredric Captax, friend and bogus analyst, who fumbles into adultery by trying to cover George's tracks. George's illumination: the intense pursuit of infidelity breeds its own terrible ennui. "He was sorry Captax had bitten his tongue, he was sorry for everybody in the world—but really, what was the difference?" The novel abounds in such images of emptiness. This is the last we see of Janet, who has just backed down from a showdown with Ruth: "She walked on, content to be aware of nothing but the winter and the empty pavement." The denouement degenerates into sheer pointlessness. It should be a commonplace by now that emptiness cannot be rendered by empty novels.

Against Mr. Wain's neutral backdrop, we can still find those coruscant winks which reveal genuine talent: "... it was almost a physical sensation of loss that she felt—as if, wandering in a desert, she had spilt her only cup of water, and now had to watch it sinking remorselessly into the sand at her feet." But nothing is really done with the twin themes: the anguish of adultery and the comic possibilities of psychiatry. The best chances are muffed. At one point, for example, Mr. Wain gives us some interesting talk between George Links and Edward Cowley on the problem of belief:

"You make believing sound very hard," said George Links.

"It is very hard. That's what Blake meant when he said, 'Many people are not capable of a firm persuasion of anything.'" (Which is, of course, precisely George's trouble.) The truth about evil! What did he want to

## John Wain and John Barth

know *that* for? It was, up to now, the one thing he felt conscious of: evil was the element he lived in, deception, equivocation, a toilsome search for pleasure that was, at bottom, self-regarding and even narcissistic.

This leads us to expect some narrative antidote to George's spiritual sloth, but nothing ever comes of it. The book peters out rather than ends. It is altogether a tired performance. There is such a malaise over this latest novel that it is hard to believe Mr. Wain did not brush up an old manuscript for publication. Only one thing seems clear. Mr. Wain's anger, if he ever had any, has turned to professional boredom.

His chief fault, I suspect, is a chronic lack of anguish. These nice reconciliations may be excused on the grounds that the comic spirit demands them—the convention of actors, just before the final curtain, pairing off behind agreeable footlights. But what we miss is the devastating bite along the way—the *cost*—the moral rancor we find in the best of Molière, Swift, Chaplin, Shaw. Mr. Wain is like a man who threatens to hurl a grenade and blow up the water works. He pokes the bomb and pokes it, making little holes, and the powder begins trickling out, until, by the time he decides to hurl, all he has left is an empty shell. The expectation is always greater than the delivery, the frightful heave and toss decants to a feeble lob. No one is really hurt. One senses that Mr. Wain is too gingerly, his treatment too glacial. Like a precocious performer, he is so facile that he never has to extend himself to win applause. It is all a little too distant, a little too contrived. He seems to care, really care, only about half the time. As in Mr. Wain's earlier novels, there is in *A Travelling Woman* just enough bed-hopping, genuine wit, crazy alibis, comic errors, clobbered noses, to keep things moving. It is a comedy of the inept, the pathos of the well-intentioned. But by his own admission Mr. Wain has nothing fundamental to quarrel with. This may explain his remarkably inconclusive endings. The gag writer, the school teacher, the journalist, the solicitor all come to accept their niche in the hierarchy with a Sweet Lady of Gloss to comfort them. One senses in all of Mr. Wain's novels the suspicious caterwauling of the outsider who cannot get in. Now that he is "in," the rutting cry has softened to a polite meow. *Born in Captivity* and *The Contenders* seem as far as Mr. Wain is able or willing to go toward exposing the pious narrow-mindedness of English provincialism, the petty stupidities of class exclusion, the mean conditions of contemporary success. Largely because of the shaky ride we are given up and down the social escalator, these are still his best books. But Mr.

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Wain is too much at pains to tell us, "It isn't so bad after all. Look at all the rosy-cheeked British youngsters and take heart." Maybe that is why Charley Lumley, Edgar Banks, Joe Shaw, Edward Cowley compromise just enough to avoid the charge of aggrandizement, and just enough to live comfortably. Maybe that is why they emerge as a new intelligentsia: the inner-directed accommodations of modern Britannia.

That Mr. Wain understands this is suggested by one of Charlie Lumley's meditations:

You were either a spider, sitting comfortably in the middle or waiting with malicious joy in hiding, or you were a fly, struggling amid the clinging threads. . . . He remembered reading about spiders. Sometimes the web caught a wasp by mistake. Then the spider had to dismantle the web. The wasp had to be let go because it was dangerous. It seemed as if the wasps had the right idea.

On the evidence of his latest book, Mr. Wain has systematically dismantled his web.

America, it seems to me, is doing better. In many ways, John Barth, who like Mr. Wain holds an academic position to earn his keep, and who unlike Mr. Wain has received almost no publicity, parallels the Britisher in thematic interest. In his first novel, a Rabelaisian farce called *The Floating Opera*, Todd Andrews, a sort of buccaneer lawyer on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, faces the same question as Edgar Banks: why go on living? A *menage à trois*, a fantastic litigation over a legacy, a terrible experience in the trenches of World War I, the floating opera itself—the last of the old river showboats—teach Todd that if there is no good reason to stay alive, there is no good reason not to, either. The creative act of writing the book (Todd tells the tale in the first person) is in itself a call to life. In his first novel, Mr. Barth reveals a kind of comic energy which makes Mr. Wain seem enervated.

By comparison, *The End of the Road* is a somber book. By his own testimony, Mr. Barth seriously set out in this one to scuttle Todd Andrews' elaborate system of value-thinking. "I deliberately had him end up with that brave ethical subjectivism," he writes in a recent letter, "in order that Jacob Horner might undo that position in #2 and carry all non-mystical value-thinking to the end of the road."

Jacob Horner, a teacher of prescriptive grammar at Wicomico State Teachers College on the Eastern Shore (which bids fair to become Mr. Barth's Yoknapatawpha—see his recent sketch in *Kenyon Review*, Winter, 1960) is, like George Links, a "placid depressive" who be-

## John Wain and John Barth

comes, at his worst, a victim of "cosmopsis," a sort of catatonic immobility. Under the care of a fantastic Doctor, half quack, half prophet, who picks him up at the railroad station in Baltimore and tries to commit him to a program of definite action, Horner becomes involved with Joe Morgan, "Scoutmaster and teacher of ancient, European and American history," and with Joe's wife, Rennie. The Morgans are a modern version of Pygmalion and Galatea, discussing, endlessly discussing their relationship, practicing the kind of scrupulous verbal honesty that leads at best to exhaustion and at worst to disaster. It all adds up to a presumptuous pride which pretends that all experience can be pressed into language. Horner's very indecisiveness allows him to drift into committing adultery with Rennie. Eventually his chronic vagueness leads to tragedy. When Rennie discovers that she is pregnant and that the child is possibly Horner's, she accedes to an abortion by the bogus Doctor. The abortionist now becomes a figure of real menace. Rennie dies on the operating table. Joe is grief-stricken and Horner, like the plaster head of Laocoön which he keeps on his bureau, feels strangled by the twin coils of Imagination and Knowledge. All are responsible.

The novel moves from elaborate whimsy to anguished terror. Near the beginning, for example, the Doctor's methods are presented as the *reductio ad absurdum* of all systematic theory. A kind of "super-pragmatist," he fits the cure to the illness. Among his alternatives are Nutritional Therapy, Medicinal Therapy, Surgical Therapy, Dynamic Therapy, Informational Therapy, Conversational Therapy, Sexual Therapy, Devotional Therapy, Occupational and Preoccupational Therapy, Theotherapy and Atheotherapy, Mythotherapy, Philosophical Therapy. For Horner he recommends Mythotherapy, the practice of adopting definite roles as an antidote to cosmopsis. When confronted with a choice, Horner is advised to follow the principles of "Sinistrality, Antecedence and Alphabetical Priority"; that is, to choose the left over the right, the first over the second, the earlier over the later letter. It is a marvellous *tour de force*, a beguiling bit of invention. Gradually the tone becomes more ominous, until the mechanistic peril is at last writ large in Rennie's skin. The abortion scene is completely unnerving, not because of its clinical detail, but because of its moral horror. Horner knows he is witnessing the abominable results of his own actions and is powerless to stop it. Placing glib articulation before instinctive humanity has cost him dearly. It is one of the most startling conclusions in recent literature. Horner's last instructions to the cabby as he leaves Wicomico

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are devastatingly exact. "Terminal," he says. The reader is hooked; there is no comfort, no escape. We are all Jake Horners.

Like John Wain, Mr. Barth swings his book on the twin pintles of infidelity and therapy. But unlike Mr. Wain he confronts the disaster of carelessness, of *all* systems with the humanity sucked out. Mr. Barth does not balk at hurting. He is more honest, and therefore more accurate, in confronting our situation. And he emerges as the writer of greater stature.

It should not surprise us that Mr. Barth, being closer to the heart of what ails us, should face a problem which Mr. Wain never does: the inadequacy of language to render the ineffable. If non-mystical value-thinking has led us to the end of the road, then we must somehow allow for what reason and language cannot contain. But how can we create that in language which is contrary to language, especially since, in a very real sense, language is the enemy in Mr. Barth's book? It is a question that every major novelist of the twentieth century has asked. Mr. Barth is no exception:

I'm sure . . . that what Rennie felt was actually neither ambivalent nor even complex; it was both single and simple, like all feelings, but like all feelings it was also completely particular and individual, and so the trouble started only when she attempted to label it with a common noun such as *love* or *abhorrence*. . . . Assigning names to things is like assigning roles to people: it is necessarily a distortion, but it is a necessary distortion if one would get on with the plot, and to the connoisseur it's all good clean fun. Rennie loved me, then, and hated me as well! Let us say she ~~x~~-ed me, and know better than to smile.

One feels behind this artlessness which conceals great art the excitement of a marginal world nudged by wonders of novelty, the illuminating excitement that always comes with new dimensions of experience. Mr. Barth breathes life into his prose in a wholly original way. He baits us on laughter and lands us on disaster. By the end, the novel becomes an indictment of how we slowly kill each other, of all codes and constructions which squeeze the life out of us. Rennie's death is horrible precisely because we have been made to *care*. We may be seeing here the emergence of a new genre—the serious farce. Comedy, tragedy, epic—for Mr. Barth the old tags no longer apply.

Mr. Barth's authentic novelty may account for the curious echoes of the book, the tough-minded anguish of *l'homme révolté*, the several levels of André Gide, the serious whimsy of Robert Musil, the tricky time maneuvers of Machado, the work of all those cunning rebels who

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have found the technical means of exploring the peculiar torments of the twentieth century. And it is all done without benefit of *Life* or kliegs.

"At twenty-one," John Wain told a reporter, "you're a fantastic rebel. If you feel you can manage it you grow a beard. You do all sorts of anti-social things. But you can't go on being a rebel forever. Thank heavens I got over all that by the time I started to write."

Contrast this with John Barth's comment: "I take no interest in my generation, whether here or in Great Britain or anyplace else that's beat; the French and Germans are my boys. Why kill horses that have lain dead since slain by that Angry Young Marquis de Sade?" In the first, to borrow terms recently explored by Wayne Burns, I sense the voice of tired counterfeit; in the second the genuine rebel. In the long run, I put my money on the man who walks alone.

### MARTIN ESSLIN ON BERTOLT BRECHT: A QUESTIONABLE PORTRAIT

*John Willett*

HAVING WRITTEN a book on the subject myself\* I may seem to be prejudiced; and certainly such well-known critics as Eric Bentley and Kenneth Tynan take a very different view; but in my opinion *Brecht: the Man and his Work* is based on two serious mistakes. It attempts to give a final verdict on a great writer's work before that work is at all widely known or appreciated by English speaking readers, or even completely published in German (Brecht's *Collected Poems*, three-quarters of which were unpublished in his lifetime, are only now about to appear in seven volumes). And it devotes half of its space to "the Man"—to his life, motives and "personality"—when many of the most elementary facts about his career still remain in the dark and no student has yet had access to his large mass of unpublished notes and letters. In short, it is premature, and it involves much too much jumping to conclusions, then buttressing those conclusions with forced interpretations of Brecht's work and the gleanings of personal gossip. It does provide a fragmentary outline of his life which may be useful, and it is certainly founded on a genuine knowledge and appreciation of his work. But by

\* *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* (New Directions, 1959).

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offering answers to readers unaware of the questions it seems likely to do more harm than good.

Mr. Esslin's thesis about Brecht is this. He sees him as subject to a whole series of agonizing choices or "dilemmas" (hence the title of the English edition: *Brecht: A Choice of Evils*). Passive by nature, rebellious as a child "in a quiet, negative way," a prey to his own impulses (like the apprentice beggar at the beginning of *The Threepenny Opera*), and helpless in face of "the inscrutable workings of the social order," Brecht turned to Communism in the second half of the 1920's as a means of disciplining himself and rationalising his pessimism and love of violence. He chose Communism, with all its harshness; yet as an exile in the 1930's he chose Scandinavia rather than the USSR as his home, and in the 1940's he chose the USA. His position was thus always ambiguous, and if he decided to return to Europe in 1947, then to settle in East Berlin, it was largely because he had had little material or artistic success in the West. He struck a "bargain" with the East Germans by which he was given his own theatre, with ample resources, but he only did so after prolonged hesitations and after taking steps to acquire citizenship and a source of income in the free world. Brecht, says Esslin,

never allowed his political convictions and socialist ideals to interfere with his healthy peasant sense of thrift. . . . When his financial advantage was at stake, these considerations simply ceased to exist.

If Brecht was then torn in two between his interests, which demanded that he remain in East Germany, and the strong critical sense which prevented him from wholly admiring the regime's political measures or accepting its aesthetic demands, this only reflected a much deeper division within himself. He managed to get by, thanks to an exercise of "slyness" and "servility" which allowed him to bow to authority with his tongue in his cheek; but behind his apparent Communism lay "a yearning for the quiet, passive acceptance of the world as it is." He claimed to ban all emotion from his writings, and to base them strictly on clear, rational calculation, yet the subconscious emotional element was always strong, and the conflict between the two often evident. Ambivalence and ambiguity run through all Brecht's work and life, and it is this that makes his plays function on so many different levels and fills all his writing with inner tensions. Left to themselves, his conscious beliefs would have turned him into a mere Communist party hack, but fortunately his stifled earlier self, with its surprising anticipations of French "anti-theatre," somehow wins the day.



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It is not an uncommon view of Brecht, though it has never been so methodically worked out; and it rests on something quite genuine: the very individual complexity of even his simplest works, and the strong dislike which some admirers or former associates feel for his person and for his post-war politics. None the less it is an extraordinarily disagreeable picture to give of a major foreign writer who has recently died, and although Mr. Esslin may protest that he all the time admires Brecht for his alleged actions and sees them as justifiable measures of self-preservation, his love of Brecht's work seems to have been unbalanced by some deep resentment. For Brecht emerges from this book a coward, a liar, a slippery compromiser with authority of any color, a man concerned primarily with his own personal advantage and success. The gossip about his love affairs, which so disfigures Willy Haas's short (West German) book about him, is rightly avoided, but he is presented as an unconscious homosexual, an admirer of the strong man and of violence in any form; two or three hints suggest that he was by no means such a profound anti-Nazi as he seemed. In this account even his Communism was secondary to his idea of his own interests, and a poetic justice saw that it turned sour on him, putting him in a position in his last years where he was forced to change or suppress his writings by party order, and found it impossible to write new plays.

But he escaped the terrible moral dilemma the events in Hungary would have presented to him. . . . For with his usual uncanny sense of timing Brecht died ten weeks before the outbreak of the Hungarian revolution.

It sounds as though it was not so tragic that Brecht died prematurely, but that he dodged the mental torture that should have been his due.

Personally, I find this an objectionable attitude, and I see no reason to suppose that Mr. Esslin's interpretation of Brecht's character is right. To say the least of it, his handling of the evidence is open to criticism. Remarks by the characters in Brecht's plays are taken as plain statements of Brecht's own views, so long as they fit the picture; thus Galileo's cowardice, which Brecht meant to condemn, is quoted as evidence of Brecht's "servility," and Peachum's cynicism (in *The Threepenny Opera*) as proving his unqualifiedly pessimistic view of the world. The sense of irony and sense of humor that underlie his more self-disparaging remarks are ignored, as is also his lively appreciation of inconsistency (if Brecht was an odd mixture it was not in unconscious defiance of a "cold" and rational intellect). It is simple to show that he was well aware of the role of emotion in his plays and came to regret some of

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those programmatic statements which have been interpreted to mean that he was actively against any aspects of art except those discussed there: see, for instance, the "Letter to an Actor" and "Conversation at a Rehearsal" that conclude his *Schriften zum Theater*.\* "Of course the stage of a realistic theatre must be peopled by live, three-dimensional, self-contradictory characters, with all their passions, unconsidered utterances and actions. . . ." But in the chapter of this book on "Reason versus Instinct" any such passages are simply ignored in order to emphasize Brecht's "often declared intention of producing one-dimensional social schemata." Declared where, I wonder. Mr. Esslin does not say.

The "Freudian" interpretation of Brecht as a repressed homosexual rests on the (limited) role played by homosexuality in three out of Brecht's first four plays; the fact that he himself and the chief characters in these plays were notably unrepessed heterosexuals is not brought to the reader's attention. The theory of his "passivity" is put forward without reference to his extraordinary capacity for work or the dynamic impression which he made on his friends. It is suggested that until "his later years," and to some extent after, he considered man to be a helpless plaything of blind social forces: this in flat contradiction of his endless insistence, from his thirties on, that men can and must master those forces: a view which he never modified. His self-interest, again, is alleged without any admission that his work from 1929 on was almost entirely non-commercial, or that his exile cut him off from the German-speaking theatre for eight years, or that his first productions for the Berliner Ensemble were done without pay, or that East Berlin is not the most comfortable place in the world in which to live. His supposed concern with violence rests on translating the word *Gewalt* as "violence" where others of us (like Eric Bentley in his version of *The Measures Taken*) would render it by the broader term "force." The "loud, frenzied demand for violent change" which is here attributed to Brecht seems to me utter nonsense, impossible to substantiate.

Besides such arbitrary and selective treatment of the evidence Mr. Esslin indulges in a fair amount of guesswork, making apparently authoritative statements which the unsuspecting reader may take to be true, although they are not supported by any facts that the author cares to produce. Thus it is suggested that Brecht was invited to settle in Moscow after 1933, and refused; that he was hesitant about returning

\* Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1957. English translation to be published by Hill and Wang, New York.

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to Germany after the war; that the East German authorities made him a definite offer, promising him his own theatre and the means to run it; that he only decided to accept this after the Berlin airlift finished; that his Austrian passport, Swiss bank account and West German publisher were all acquired as precautionary measures so as to keep a foot in the West; that the authorities thereafter ordered him to write the kind of plays they wanted, banning or imposing alterations on certain of his previous works; that he finished as a definite supporter of Wolfgang Harich's opposition movement. None of these claims is backed up, and though they are mostly familiar ones, especially in Western Germany, I myself have never heard any real evidence for them other than speculative gossip. It would be a good thing if Brecht's executors were prepared to refute them in greater detail, and were generally less hesitant in releasing material which bears on the question of Brecht's political orthodoxy; but meanwhile they assure us that such guesses are unfounded, and I for one think that the balance of probability is on their side.

I want to thrash all this out with Mr. Esslin, and he has kindly agreed to collaborate in a dialogue where we can go into such questions in more detail and at greater length. His book is not by any means wholly misleading, for he leans heavily enough on his actual knowledge of Brecht's work, especially in the forty pages on language and dramatic theory, to convey a good deal that is authentic, and the bibliographical section at the end (brought up to date for the American edition, and supplemented by a list of US Brecht productions) is certain to be of use. But it puts into circulation so many misconceptions, several of which would be libellous if Brecht were not dead, and these have been so unquestioningly accepted by reputable critics that it may do a good deal of harm. Thus *The Times Literary Supplement*, in a review of the English edition (November 6th, 1959), was able to write that

His early plays . . . add up to a welter of violent nastiness . . . homosexuality, at a time when he increasingly cultivated the society of boxers and racing cyclists, appeared in such works as *Baal*, *Im Dickicht*, *Edward II*. In *Mann ist Mann* castration, self-castration, is considered as a desirable method of discipline. . . .

In the event, however, he turned for a framework to his life not to physical castration but to Communism. Whether or not he was ever a Party member is doubtful; but for the rest of his life he applied rigid Marxist rules to life and art with the dogged incomprehension of a schoolboy wielding a slide-rule. . . .

Poor Brecht! Appalled by the state of the world, shocked by his own capacity for meanness, frightened by his own vitality, he reacted with an adolescent

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reflex, plunged for the Marxist lifeline, yet never quite subdued—luckily for us, since its reassertion produced his greatest plays—his own nature. But the resulting conflict was too much for him: to the end willing (witness the abject *Herrnburger Bericht*) to sing the Party's tune, he became less and less able to do so, and died young.

A picture like this is repulsive; it is false; and as a first approach to a great poet it can only be called perverse. None the less it is a picture which Mr. Esslin gives, if (as readers are bound to do) you take his hints as established facts. It is difficult to believe that it is not the one which he means to convey.

It seems to me that the ambivalence which Mr. Esslin attributes to Brecht is very much more clearly visible in himself: in the contrast between his evident love of Brecht's work and his conscious or unconscious denigration of the man. He will speak of the same work quite differently (in the case of *Senora Carrar's Rifles* or the anti-Nazi "German Satires"), according to whether he is judging the man or his writing; and to establish a point against the former he will make some surprising mistakes about the plays: e.g., the boy in *He who says Yes* does not jump into the abyss; Katrin in *Mother Courage* is not necessarily raped, least of all in view of the audience; the pilot in *The Didactic Play of Baden* is not annihilated; Matti in *Puntila* is not a prig; the moral of *The Exception and the Rule* is not that "hatred and violence [are] the rule by which alone we can regulate our conduct." Wherever his feeling for the work conflicts with his feelings about the man it seems to be the latter that predominate, and this lack of balance is very much that of the book's plan, which allots at most a third of the main text to the writings themselves. The motive for this, to my mind, is an undue concern with Brecht's "politics"; that is to say, not so much with the social philosophy inherent in his aesthetic theories, his language and his formal innovations (an important subject which is relatively neglected here), as with his personal actions and his relationship to the Communist Party line.

Brecht, it is suggested, "was more deeply involved in the conflicts of his age than most of his contemporaries"; he was "deeply tainted with the evil of our time." He was certainly more sensitive to the conflicts and aware of the evil than are most writers, or perhaps most men, but to speak as if he played any practical part in either is absurd. Following the Nō drama a good deal more closely than he followed Lenin, he was able to see and state the theoretical case for killing the Young Comrade in *The Measures Taken*, but this hardly makes him so "tainted" as

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those who, without seeing any case other than duty, were involved in the quite practical slaughter of very large numbers of men: for instance, at Auschwitz, Katyn, Hiroshima, and Dresden. The real taint, it is fairly clear, lay less in any action or opinion of Brecht's under the Weimar Republic or during his emigration, when his writings movingly expressed the feelings of many anti-Nazis whose only offence was to have been "premature," than in his return in 1948 and subsequent loyalty to a country whose existence it is now Western policy to deny. About this Mr. Esslin feels most strongly; he sees it as ruled by "one of the most cruel and heartless regimes in history," which "called out Soviet tanks to shoot down unarmed workers" in the June, 1953 rioting. Out of a lifetime which included two world wars, the Russian revolution, and the rise and fall of Hitler, these riots are the only political event included in the chronology at the end of the book.

I do not want to make the East German government appear more enlightened than it is, or than Brecht himself (by all accounts) privately maintained. But to judge it thus is cold war propaganda rather than historical perspective, and the author is surely seeing it from the special standpoint of the BBC's German service and the Congress for Cultural Freedom rather than in the light of his own experience. Admittedly this view of Eastern Germany and of the scale of the 1953 rioting has become part of our mythology, and especially of West German mythology, but the British Foreign Secretary at the time spoke of the "restraint" of the Soviet troops; and the extent of the casualties—150, including police, according to the estimate of the West German Free Lawyers' Committee—has only too often been surpassed. Brecht's crime was that at this juncture he was prepared to criticize the regime in the name of the East German workers, but not to desert it in face of an apparent threat from West Berlin; he said as much, and naturally enough only the latter part of his message was published. Mr. Esslin gives what seems a quite fair account of this episode, but he is none the less infected with the resentment which the publication caused. He attaches too much weight to Brecht's association with the wrong side; he is too anxious to explain away his loyalty in terms of personal advantage, and to show that it was harmful to his work.

What he has given is a very satisfying account of Brecht for those who admire Brecht as a writer and theatrical director but disapprove of the man himself and his political views. He has ingeniously split him into two for split readers, but only at the cost of ignoring important elements of his life and work, and only by mauling the evidence. Brecht's

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aim to make Marxism more empirical and more humane—which bears on one of the greatest questions of our time, and the most worth discussing—he dismisses flatly: “Events have shown again and again that such hopes are of necessity an illusion.” Yet unless one sees that this was among the responsibilities which Brecht gave himself in his last years it is impossible to understand what he was up to in East Germany, or what his achievement may prove to be. There is a process of evolution at work in Eastern Europe, and the loosening-up has been general, if jerky, over the last four years; despite setbacks, the law, literature, official aesthetics and even relations with foreign countries have all become rather more civilized; and we cannot dissociate this from Brecht’s work on behalf of artistic standards in East Germany, his prestige among liberal Communists in Poland, or his slow acceptance into the Soviet aesthetic canon. Certainly he had to fight for this, but all the signs are that he did so willingly and with his eyes open; the Communist world was where he belonged, and it was where he could make his influence felt. This to my mind was a far more courageous, responsible and uncomfortable position to take up than any role that Brecht might conceivably have played in Western Europe or the USA. It was not a choice which should have surprised anyone who knew Brecht’s works, with their consistent scepticism and pugnacity and critical force.

Brecht was a genius, and a very complex one, living an exposed life in a bad time. There is a lot of work to be done before we can understand him, but it is surely quite wrong to start by reducing his many aspects to two “dialectically” opposed sides, meeting in a succession of dilemmas. Admittedly it was his own weakness that he himself often looked at the world in this stylized antithetical way, which derives from Marx and Hegel. But his own character was both more and less inconsistent than that; for if he was divided he was also able to reconcile his divisions in a surprisingly coherent attitude towards art and life, with which few of his works or actions (and then not always the expected ones) seem to clash. “Colorful and contradictory,” Mr. Esslin calls him in his introduction. If you combine a number of contradictory colors, what are you left with? Brecht’s own favorite grey. This book’s mistake is to give us black and white.

## to the editor

### On Ruiz's "Latin America: Democracy without Reform"

#### *Comment and Rejoinder*

##### REFORM WITHOUT DEMOCRACY

Sir: "There may be, in fact, if we exclude Castro, less democracy now than in the days of Perón and Vargas," is the conclusion concerning Latin America in Ramón Eduardo Ruiz's article, "Democracy without Reform," published in your winter issue. These days (1943-1955 for Perón, 1930-1945 and again 1950-1954 for Vargas) were also those of Gómez and Pérez Jiménez in Venezuela, of Benavides and Odria in Peru, of Páez, Bush, Rojas Pinilla, Batista, Ubico, Trujillo, Somoza and many others under whose rule, according to the article, "if democracy means liberty of all" there would have been more liberty than in 1960.

"Democracy . . . emphasizing universal suffrage, honest elections, civil liberties" is disparaged, because in Latin America "the trend towards democracy does not indicate a retreat from fundamental socio-economic policies of the past," because "liberals and conservatives, and friends of dictatorship, have accepted . . . the economic status quo." "Economics lies at the root of Latin American problems," the answer to which is "land reform"; objection is made to the priority given to "industry and urban development—the traditional demands of the conservatives." Singling out the Argentine, "the return of democracy may have brought with it a shift from reform to

the ways of the past" (as if in pre-Perón Argentina there had been democracy when Castillo, Justo and Uriburu ruled the country).

Professor Ruiz is concerned with the priority of agriculture over industry and with the need of an agrarian reform abolishing the cancer of landlordism—the scourge of most agricultural societies today as in the past. On both counts his position is likely to meet with approval among liberal-minded people. I for one agree a hundred per cent on the question of the agrarian reform, on social and political more than on economic grounds. On the question of agriculture versus industry—an argument widely debated in Europe during the 19th century and in this century in Asia—it would help Latin Americans if they were acquainted both with European experiences and the transformation of backward agrarian societies into advanced industrial societies; if they were acquainted also with the debates in Western Europe between Liberals who advocated industrialization and Conservatives who opposed it, and in Eastern Europe (as in much of Asia today) between Marxist Socialists, who advocated industrialization and agrarian Socialists (in Russia, for instance, the Revolutionary Socialists who received 65% of the popular vote in 1917 and were later destroyed by the Communists), who opposed it. But there is



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another point on which the position of the article is extremely clear, and which is too fundamental to be ignored: approval of dictatorships, which are the expression of movements incompatible with an evolution towards democracy, the organization of the equal liberty of the citizens.

I read the article in sorrow—remembering people I knew on the other side of the Atlantic thirty, forty years ago who were moved by the same reforming passion, used the same language, ridiculed democracy as a “middle-class way of life,” made a distinction between false or “Western” democracy and “real” democracy, called liberty in democratic countries a sham. They were inspired by generous impulses, and in the name of necessary reforms, of justice, of the good of masses “for whom political democracy is meaningless,” sincerely convinced that the solution of economic ills would solve all problems, enthusiastically supported Mussolini and Lenin, Pilsudski and Bela Kun, Hitler and Stalin, and a dozen other dictators; most of them never thought of violence and brutality leading to genocide, war and totalitarian control of human life in all its aspects—which they got; they had simply wanted a few reforms.

These reformers, millions of them, were impatient with democratic procedure, with the seemingly foolish respect for institutions the key to which is free election by the citizens of those who draft laws and supervision by bodies responsible to the citizens over those who enforce the laws. They were successful: by June 1940 there were no democracies left on the European continent except in Switzerland, Fin-

land and Sweden. Fascists and communists, both born from the reforming intellectuals’ revolt against democracy, had operated in the twenties and thirties along parallel lines; in 1939 they had even shaken hands because their hatred of democracy was greater than the hatred each felt towards the other. The admiration shown for the Latin American counterparts of these European authoritarian movements, for Argentinian *justicialismo*, for Brazilian *integralismo*, for Cuban Marxism-Leninism—led by men not less popular than were Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin—entitles the reader of “Democracy without Reform” to suppose that its stand is similar to that of others who, in the recent past, in the name of reforms, of new orders and of waves of the future, held democracy in scorn.

I read the article in sorrow because what a generation ago were continental European phenomena are today worldwide phenomena, because under different names similar aspirations and similar forces are at work in Asia, Africa and Latin America; because too many educated people have already chosen the short cut of dictatorship to a better life, ignoring the evidence of this and of past generations, unaware that the short cut is not a short cut at all but the road to a situation incompatible in the long run with further progress, the road either to the living death of stagnation or to bloodshed. If many educated Americans, citizens of the nation in which alone lies the hope of sparing the world the fate that befell Europe twenty years ago, share this view, what has been achieved thus far through great suffering will come to nothing.

As one of the "liberals ecstatic over the fall of Perón, Pérez Jiménez and their like," I do not disapprove of violent action when force is the only solution to an evil situation: democracy is not inherent in the nature either of man or of the universe; it is born in the minds and consciences of a few who may become fairly numerous in the authoritarian societies, but who are not likely to be successful unless violence is used against those who stand for despotism, sometimes a minority but more often the majority. Few democracies have come into existence without violence or bloodshed. . . . Nor am I one to disapprove of coercion when needed to destroy privileges and to introduce necessary reforms—democratic reforms embracing not only free political institutions but also the equality without which free institutions soon collapse. Historical evidence shows that the greater the privilege, of a class, a race, a religious body, an economic group, the greater the coercion needed to suppress it.

The division between democrats and anti-democrats within a revolutionary movement, as happens today in Cuba where traditional *caudillismo* has been outgrown and where are re-enacted the conflicts Europeans have known for generations, does not arise from the legitimacy of violence in bringing down despotism, and of coercion in destroying or at least curbing privilege. The use of force against Batista and his henchmen was the only way to put an end to the Cuban dictatorship. The confiscation of heavily concentrated agricultural and industrial property in Cuba is an act of justice, an indispensable democratic reform, as were the

agrarian reform in Czechoslovakia in the twenties and that carried out by General MacArthur in Japan in the late forties, as were the nationalization of oil properties in Mexico in the thirties and in Iran in the fifties.

The division within a revolutionary movement between liberals who are for democracy and non-liberal forces advocating dictatorship (often called real or genuine democracy and as defined by the Jacobins, by Marx and by Leo XIII) and expressing themselves through the elimination first of all of political liberty, concerns the essence of democracy: suffrage, elections, civil liberties. It is an old problem. It happened after most liberal revolutions. Girondists and Mensheviks, who stood for a democratic republic, were despised by the supporters of Robespierre and Lenin. Latin American democrats—by no means a uniform group, although large enough to make its influence felt—are labelled reactionaries by the admirers of Perón, Vargas, and by whoever in the name of Castro runs Cuba today, just as European democrats were labelled reactionaries in the twenties and thirties by their fascist and communist opponents. "Why democracy?" ask authoritarian reformers—"Why this insistence on a procedure which often slows down the reforming process, weakens governments, allows a reactionary opposition to survive, promotes factionalism and partisanship, often favors strife, corruption and inefficiency? Give us power, total power, and we will do the things that need to be done!"

For the citizens of seventy Latin American, African and Asian nations the answer to the question "Why de-

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mocracy?" matters today as it did to the twenty-odd European nations whose most generous groups a generation ago successfully advocated dictatorships. Together with coercion for the destruction of privileges, the undemocratic concentration of arbitrary power may be a necessity in periods of crisis. However, it makes a total difference to future developments if power resides in forces whose spokesmen are men like Nehru, Bourguiba or Cárdenas or in forces whose spokesmen are men such as Mao, Nasser or Perón. With Cárdenas there was, even if it did not materialize, the possibility of a democratic evolution totally impossible with Perón. Such a possibility exists with Nehru and Bourguiba, but not with Mao and Nasser.

We need to be aware of the nature of the forces and movements operating in a society; we need to be aware not only of their aspirations and goals but chiefly of the institutions—the means—through which aspirations and goals are to be realized. Here the intellectual has a considerable responsibility because it is his duty to fit the particular into the general, an event into a chain of events, to warn about developments implicit not only in what happens today but in the spirit accompanying present events.

It is only sincere democrats who may not abuse the power they hold and who may not make repression permanent. To surrender one's liberties to a dictator is fraught with danger, because taking away power from a dictator is infinitely difficult. "Democracy without Reform" extolls dictatorial rule, admires Perón, Vargas and those now in control of Cuba, spokesmen for

movements which, in the name of true democracy and real liberty, share the traditional view that human beings are an irresponsible herd to be guided and protected by their betters, fascist *rajes* or the proletariat's conscious *avant-garde*.

For the zealous but non-liberal reformer, man's right and duty to live his own life within the limits imposed by the equal liberty of others, the dignity and responsibility of the individual, the rule of law and the rest of the liberals' arguments for democracy are meaningless expressions. Leaving aside the liberal ideology, one should look at the evidence provided by dictatorships in the 20th century: Italian fascism (which Perón did his best to imitate) gave the Italian nation ten years of wars, Russian and Chinese communism (which Guevara is doing his best to imitate in Cuba), liquidated not millions but tens of millions of members of unwelcome groups—ethnic, religious and economic (including the eight million peasants who filled Soviet concentration camps in 1930, providing the unpaid labor required for the collectivist industrialization of the country, including tens of millions of peasants coerced into becoming an unpaid proletariat in China). One can add the hundreds of cities destroyed by Nazi fury in World War II, the liquidation camps, Pearl Harbor, the new oligarchies in the thirteen communist dictatorships, more oppressive than the old, the state of chronic warfare maintained by Nasser—the Egyptian Perón—against all his neighbors, the danger of armed conflicts in the Caribbean now coming from the Cuban as well as the Dominican dictator-

ships: this—and a good deal more—is the sum total of 20th century dictatorships. Whatever Cubans, Vargas and Perón may be individually, they belong to movements which are totally incompatible with any development along democratic lines.

What about the economic and social reforms introduced by dictators? Don't they compensate for concentration and extermination camps, for wars, for the unrest and the tension they cause? Here again one should look at the evidence: the list of reforms introduced by reforming dictators is an impressive one; but after decades of dictatorial violence, there is less poverty, less inequality, less violence, less injustice, less threat to peace in the few nations in which an effort has been made to solve problems democratically than in the many where dictatorships have triumphed.

This statement probably sounds ludicrous to most. Because democracy is the organization of the equal liberty of the citizens, and since the key liberty is freedom of expression, in a democracy criticism, in the vulgar sense of fault-finding, tends to prevail. In a democracy, what is wrong is discussed, in a dictatorship, what is wrong is not discussed: there is abundant documentation about every single defect in the USA or the UK, but there is little definite documentation about defects in the USSR or the UAR where, moreover, ignorance of what is wrong keeps people happy. If one adds to that the greater complexity of any system based on liberty compared with any system based on authority, and the greater difficulty of grasping the unity of pluralism (a necessary result of lib-

erty) than the unity of authoritarian monism, one easily sees how dictatorships appeal more than democracies, which—taking the world as a whole—are unquestionably losing ground.

.....

Democracy is full of defects; as Churchill has said, it is the worst form of government, except for all the others. Democracy tries, on the national and the international level, to achieve through a simple procedure the peaceful coexistence of individuals and groups while enabling them to live—within the frame of laws derived from the consent of the community—their own lives, and to bring, in their own way, their contribution to the progress of mankind. There is little democracy today, but this makes it even more imperative to be aware of the direction in which movements to which one gives support are going. I am convinced that the failure of democracy—a real possibility, considering the number of people attracted by movements incompatible with it—will be a tragedy. The alternative to democracy is either conflict (every single new dictator today is expanding his armed forces) or the living death of the successful authoritarian society.

It will be argued that Latin America is different from the rest of the world, just as it was argued a generation ago that fascism was not for export, that Chinese reformers had nothing in common with Soviet communism. We tend to forget that human beings are the same everywhere, that the range of solutions to problems is limited, that a new word rarely indicates a new solution.

All this is long and tedious; how-

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ever, in view of what is at stake in the near and remote future, I suggest—before expressing whole-hearted approval of dictatorships and thereby weakening the cause of democracy—serious reflection on the implications of an authoritarian world ruled by dictators.

Massimo Salvadori  
Northampton, Mass.

### THE REDUCTION OF POVERTY

Drafting a reply to Professor Massimo Salvadori, friend and distinguished colleague, is a task that I shoulder with considerable reluctance. With much of what he believes, I am in complete agreement. Now we face each other across the printed page, which may exaggerate differences or plant them where none exist. This answer, therefore, is written with the hope that misunderstanding will be eliminated and that the discussion will not obscure the fact that Salvadori and I share a common goal.

Salvadori writes that my essay depicts the impatience of the reformer with the democratic processes, an attitude that he castigates, comparing it with that of European liberals who paved the way for Hitler and Mussolini. He condemns thinking in economic rather than political terms. Equally convinced is he that I favor dictatorships in Latin America. He is mistaken. Nowhere have I questioned the idea of democracy and liberty, which I prize as strongly as he; nor am I sympathetic to dictators, having opposed Pérez Jiménez, Odría, Perón, Trujillo, Franco, and the like from the beginning. Economics are stressed because the problems of Latin America are economic.

Millions in Latin America live in squalor, poverty and ignorance. Before democracy can take root, this picture must change. If so-called democratic governments in Latin America are censured, it is because they are neither democratic nor concerned with the social welfare of the majority. "In the United States and in Western Europe," to quote the letter sent to President Eisenhower by the Chilean Confederation of Students, "it makes sense to . . . defend the prevailing order," because there it "represents values which are shared by everybody." Defending what passes for democracy in Latin America often "means maintaining the privileges of a thin layer of the population surrounded by an ocean of poor for whom the social order means little or literally nothing." The Liberal and Conservative parties of Colombia are a case in point. Until recently there was little to choose between them: both ruled for a tiny minority of wealth. If the situation has changed, the change has come recently.

This is the heart of the matter. No effort was made to question the principle of a free society, or to support dictatorial regimes. Nor is the Latin American scene similar to that of Europe in the twenties and thirties. The societies and problems are quite different. Honesty, furthermore, compels one to recognize that some of the strong men of Latin America, ironically, have granted social benefits denied by others who wore the mantle of democracy. President Lázaro Cárdenas of Mexico is an example of this. While the liberals of England and France were selling Republican Spain to the fascists, he sent arms and food to the

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## to the editor

Loyalists and opened Mexico to thousands of refugees from the war. By giving the people land, respecting the rights of labor, encouraging peasant organizations, and stepping out of office when his term was up, he laid the foundations for what may develop eventually into a democratic system.

There is still another side overlooked by Salvadori. A European by birth and training, he identifies Latin American strong men with dictators in the Old World. This is an error. Authoritarian regimes there have been south of the Rio Grande, cruel, despotic, and blind to the plight of the masses; German and Italian style totalitarian dictators are foreign to Latin America, even granting that Perón and Vargas had similar ideological ambitions. Putting Cuba's Castro in the Marxist-Leninist

camp overlooks the essentially conservative character of a number of his reforms, and judges before the evidence is in.

Latin America's exploited peasants and workers, landless, ill-fed, and ill-housed, cry for justice; and "social justice," to quote Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "calls definitely, plainly for the reduction of poverty." Without this, which can come only through land reform in a majority of countries, as Secretary of State Christian Herter has recognized belatedly, there will be no democracy. If democracy is what Professor Salvadori wants, he will not get it until something is done about the economic questions of the region.

Ramón Eduardo Ruiz  
Northampton, Mass.

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## contributors

(continued from page 414)

will appear soon in *Poetry* and the *Yale Review*. *Louis Ginsberg* teaches at Rutgers, *John Holmes* at Tufts. *Francis Golfing*, of Bennington College, is presently at work on a book about Utopia, with his wife, the poet *Barbara Gibbs*.

*George Bluestone*, whose new novel, *The Private World of Gully Powers*, will be published by Doubleday in July, teaches at the University of Washington. *John Willett* is an English critic who has written a book on Brecht. *Massimo Salvadori* and *Ramón Eduardo Ruíz* are in the Department of History at Smith College. *Anne Halley*, whose poetry appeared in our winter issue, lives in Amherst. *Alex Page* and *Daniel C. O'Neil* are on the faculty of the University of Massachusetts.

*Leonard Baskin*, who recently exhibited his sculptures, woodcuts and drawings at the Borgenicht Gallery in New York City, is Associate Professor of Art at Smith College.

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The Gehenna Press, conducted by *Esther* and *Leonard Baskin* and *Richard Warren*, has been producing fine printing for the past eight years. Their edition of *Hart Crane's Voyages*, for the Museum of Modern Art, was chosen as one

of the Fifty Books of the Year in 1958.

. . .

The texts from which the Barlach translations were made are in *Das dichterische Werk* and *Leben und Werk in seinen Briefen*, published by R. Piper Verlag, Munich, in 1952 and 1956. Brecht's "Notizen zur Barlach-Ausstellung" is in *Sinn und Form*, IV, 1952.

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Morris Lazerowitz's "The Hidden Structure of Philosophical Theories" will appear in our summer issue.

## JACK McGLYNN

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# MR

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To our patrons—present and future—our sincerest thanks.

## *The Editors*

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Each Saturday while the University is in session, a Guest Tour of the campus starts at the Student Union at 10:30 A.M.

For a copy of *Campus Guide*, write to the University Editor, South College.



## contributors

THE PORTRAIT of Marianne Moore on the cover was made by Gaston Lachaise in 1924, when the two were contributors to *The Dial*. Years later, thinking back on "the compacted pleasantness of those days," Miss Moore remembered that "Gaston Lachaise's stubbornness and naturalness were a work of art above even the most important sculpture. Admitting to an undiminishing sense of burden that made frivolities or time-killings a sort of poison to him, he was as deliberate as if under a spell. I remember his saying with almost primitive-tribal moroseness, 'But I believe in a large amount of work'; as on another occasion, 'Cats. I could learn a million of things from cats.'"

C. L. Barber of Amherst College, author of *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, will be a visiting professor at Princeton next year, engaged in research. Ellsworth Barnard, who teaches at Northern Michigan College, has published books on Shelley and E. A. Robinson, and is now at work on a biography of Wendell Willkie. Leon O. Barron gave a course in poetry at Chautauqua in July. Sam Bradley is an editor of *Approach*. Louis O. Coxe, Pierce Professor of English at Bowdoin, is the author of *Middle Passage, Poem* (University of Chicago Press).

Gary Elder lives near San Francisco; "Dorian Woman" is

(continued on page 785)

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